

School Edition

THE WORKS
OF
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

POET LAUREATE

IN FOUR PARTS

PART III

London
MACMILLAN AND CO

1884

Printed by R. & R. CLAY at the Aldine Press

CONTENTS

IDYLLS OF THE KING	PAGE
Dedication	2
The Coming of Arthur	3
The Round Table	11
Gareth and Lynette	11
Geraunt and Enid	35
Merlin and Vivien	63
Lancelot and Elaine	73
The Holy Grail	101
Pelleas and Ettarre	116
The Last Tournament	126
Guinevere	139
The Passing of Arthur	150
To the Queen	157

IDYLLS OF THE KING

DEDICATION

THESE to His Memory—since he held
 them dear,
Perchance as finding there unconsciously
Some image of himself—I dedicate,
I dedicate, I consecrate with tears—
These Idylls

 And indeed He seems to me
Scarce other than my king's ideal knight,
'Who revered his conscience as his
 king,
Whose glory was, redressing human wrong,
Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd
 to it,
Who loved one only and who claved to her—'
Her—over all whose realms to their last
 isle,
Commingled with the gloom of imminent
 wail,
The shadow of His loss drew like eclipse,
Darkening the world We have lost
 him he is gone
We know him now all narrow jealousies
Are silent, and we see him as he moved,
How modest, kindly, all accomplish'd,
 wise,
With what sublime repression of himself,
And in what limits, and how tenderly,
Not swaying to this faction or to that,
Not making his high place the lawless
 perch
Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage ground
For pleasure, but thro' all this tract of
 years
Wearing the white flower of a blameless
 life,

Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
In that fierce light which beats upon a
 throne,
And blackens every blot for where is he,
Who dares foreshadow for an only son
A lovelier life, a more unstain'd, than his?
Or how should England dierming of *his*
 sons

Hope more for these than some inheritance
Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,
Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,
Laborious for her people and her poor—
Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day—
Far-sighted summoner of Woe and Waste
To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace—
Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam
Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,
Dear to thyland and ours, a Prince indeed,
Beyond all titles, and a household name,
Hereafter, thro' all times, Albeit the Good

 Break not, O woman's heart, but still
 endure,
Break not, for thou art Royal, but endure,
Remembering all the beauty of that strain
Which shone so close beside Thee that
 ye made
One light together, but has past and leaves
The Crown a lonely splendour

 May all love,
His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow Thee,
The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,
The love of all Thy daughters cherish Thee,
The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,
Till God's love set Thee at his side again!

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

LEODOGRAN, the King of Camelard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other
child,
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land,
And still from time to time the heathen
host
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was
left
And so there grew great tracts of wilder-
ness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and
more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur
came
For first Aurelius lived and fought and
died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either failed to make the kingdom
one
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thio' the puissance of his Table
Round,
Drew all their petty princedoms under
him,
Their king and head, and made a realm,
and reign'd

And thus the land of Camelard was
waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast
therein,
And none or few to scare or chase the
beast,
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and
bear
Came night and day, and rooted in the
fields,
And wallow'd in the gardens of the King
And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and
then,
Her own blood lost or dead, lent her
fierce teat

To human sucklings, and the children,
housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would
growl,
And mock their foster mother on four feet,
Till, straiten'd, they grew up to wolf
like men,
Worse than the wolves And King
Leodogran
Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
And Caesar's eagle then his brother king,
Uther, assail'd him last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth
with blood,
And on the spine that split the mother's
heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till,
amazed,
He knew not whither he should turn for
aid

But—for he heard of Arthur newly
crown'd,
Tno' not without uproar made by those
who cried, 'He is not Uther's son'—the
King
Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us
thou'
For here between the man and beast we
die'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of
arms,
But heard the call, and came and
Guinevere
Stood by the castle walls to watch him
pass,
But since he neither wore on helm or
shield
The golden symbol of his kingship,
But rode a simple knight among his
knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she
saw,
One among many, tho' his face was bare
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life

Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and
pitch'd
His tents beside the forest Then he
died
The heathen, after, slew the beast, and
fell'd
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the
knight
And so return'd

For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great Lords and Barons of his
realm
Flash'd forth and into war for most of
these,
Collaguung with a score of petty kings,
Made head against him, crying, 'Who
is he
That he should rule us? who hath proven
him
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,
And find not face nor bearing, limbs nor
voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew
This is the son of Gorlois, not the King,
This is the son of Anton, not the King'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle,
felt
Triavail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere,
And thinking as he rode, 'If my father said
That there between the man and beast
they die
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with
me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be
join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my
work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own
realm

Victor and lord But were I join'd with
her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten
it,
And power on this dead world to make
it live'

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the
tale—
When Arthur reach'd a field of-battle
bright
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the
world
Was all so clear about him, that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
And even in high day the morning star
So when the King had set his banner
abroad,
At once from either side, with trumpet-
blast,
And shouts, and clarions shilling unto
blood,
The long linc'd battle let their horses
run
And now the Barons and the kings pie-
ced,
And now the King, as here and there
that war
Went swaying, but the Powers who walk
the world
Made lightnings and great thunders over
him,
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by man
might,
And mightier of his hands with every
blow,
And leading all his knighthood threw the
kings
Carados, Urien, Cridlemont of Wales,
Claudias, and Clarence of Northumber-
land,
The King Brandagoras of Latangoi,
With Angusant of Erin, Morganoir,
And Lot of Orkney Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees
To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep, they swerved
and brake

Flying, and Arthur coul'd to stay the
brands

That hack'd among the flyers, 'Ho ! they
yield !'

So like a painted battle the war stood
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord
Helugh'd upon his warrior whom he loved
And honour'd most 'Thou dost not
doubt me King,

So well thine arm hath wrought for me
to day '

'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of
God

Descends upon thee in the battle field
I know thee for my King !' Whereat the

two,
For each had waded either in the fight,
Swore on the field of death a deathless
love

And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in
man

Let chance what will, I trust thee to the
death '

Then quickly from the foughten field
he sent

Ulfus, and Briastus, and Bedivere,
His new made knights, to King Leodog-
ran,

Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee
well,

Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife '

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in
heart

Debating—'How should I that am a
king,

However much he help me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son?'—lifted his voice, and
call'd

A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel 'Knowest thou aught of
Arthur's birth ?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and
said,

'Sir King, there be but two old men that
know

And each is twice as old as I, and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro' his magic art, and one
Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bley,
Who taught him magic, but the scholar

was
Before the master, and so far, that Bley's
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and
wrote

All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great annual book, where after years
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth '

To whom the King Leodogran replied,
'O friend, had I been helpen half as well
By this King Arthur as by thee to day,
I then best and man had had then share
of me

But summon he us before us yet once more
Ulfus, and Briastus, and Bedivere '

Then, when they came before him, the
King said,

'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser
fowl,

And reason in the chase but wherefore
now

Do these you loads sin up the heat of
war,

Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,
Others of Anton? Tell me, ye your
selves,

Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?'

And Ulfus and Briastus answer'd, 'Ay '
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning,
spoke—

For bold in heart and act and word was
he,

Whenever slander breathed against the
King—

'Sir, there be many rumours on this
head

For there be those who hate him in their
hearts,

Call him baseborn, and since his ways are
sweet,

And thence are bestial, hold him less than
man

And there be those who deem him more
than man,
And dream he dropt from heaven but
my belief

In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
Su, for ye know that in King Uther's
time

The pince and warrior Gorlois, he that
held

Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne
And daughters had she borne him,—one
whereof,

Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli-
cent,

Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love
But she, a stunless wife to Gorlois,
So loathed the bight dishonour of his
love,

That Gorlois and King Uther went to war
And overthrown was Gorlois and slain
Then Uther in his wrath and heart besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swim about their
walls,

Left her and fled, and Uther entered in,
And there was none to call to but himself
So, compass'd by the power of the King,
Enforced she was to wed him in her towers,
And with a shameful swiftness after-
ward,

Not many moons, King Uther died him-
self,

Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to
wrack

And that same night, the night of the new
year,

By reason of the bitterness and grief
That vexed his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Delivered at a secret postern gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come, because the
lords

Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn
the child

Piecemeal among them, had they known,
for each "

But sought to rule for his own self and
hand,

And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorlois. Wherefore Merlin took the
child,

And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther, and his wife
Nursed the young pince, and rear'd him
with her own,

And no man knew. And ever since the
lords

Have foughten like wild beasts among
themselves,

So that the realm has gone to wrack
but now,

This year, when Merlin (for his hour had
come)

Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the
hall,

Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's heir, your
king,"

A hundred voices cried, 'Away with him!
No king of ours! A son of Gorlois he,
Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
Or else baseborn.' Yet Merlin thro' his
craft,

And while the people clamour'd for a king,
Had Arthur crown'd, but after, the great
lords

Divided, and so broke out in open war "

Then while the King debated with
himself

If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
Or born the son of Gorlois, after death,
Or Uther's son, and born before his
time,

Or whether there were truth in anything
Said by these three, there came to Camel-
lud,

With Gawain and young Mordred, her two
sons,

Iol's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli-
cent,

Whom as he could, not as he would, the
King

Made first for, saying, as they sat at
meat,

“A doubtful throne is ice on summer
seas
Ye come from Arthur’s court Victors his
men
Report him ! Yea, but ye—think ye this
king—
So many those that hate him, and so
strong,
So few his knights, however brave they
be—
Hath body enow to hold his foemen
down ?”

“O King,” she cried, “and I will tell
these few,
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with
him,
For I was near him when the savage yells
Of Uther’s peerage died, and Arthur sat
Crown’d on the dais, and his warriors
cried,
“Be thou the king, and we will work thy
will
Who love thee.” Then the King in low
deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strict vows to his own
self,
That when they rose, knighted from
kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush’d, and others dazed, as one
who wakes
Half blinded at the coming of a light

“But when he spake and cheer’d his
Table Round
With huge divine and comfortable words
Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld
From eye to eye thro’ all their Order flash
A momentary likeness of the King
And ere it left their faces, thro’ the cross
And those around it and the Crucified,
Down from the casement over Arthur,
smote
Flame colour, red and rime, in three
rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens,
Who stood in silence near his throne, the
friends

III

Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his
need

“And there I saw mage Merlin, whose
vast wit
And hundred winters are but as the hands
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege

“And near him stood the Lady of the
Lake,
Who knows a subtler magic than his
own—

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonder
ful
She gave the King his huge cross hilted
sword,

Whereby to drive the heathen out a mist
Of incense curl’d about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the monster
gloom,

But there was heard among the holy
hymns

A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep, calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world, and when the
surface rolls,

Hath power to walk the waters like our
Lord

“There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the
sword

That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row’d across and took it—rich
With jewels, elfin Urm, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so
bright

That men were blinded by it—on one side,
Given in the oldest tongue of all this
world,

“I like me” but turn the blade and ye
shall see,

And witten in the speech ye speak your
self,

“Crist me away !” And said was Arthur’s
fate

I think it, but old Merlin counsel’d him,
“Take thou and strike ! the time to cast
away

12

Is yet fu-off" So this gient brand the
king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen
down'

Thereat Leodogrian rejoiced, but
thought

To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask d,
Fixing full eyes of question on hei face,
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own deu sister,' and she said,
'Daughter of Gorlois and Ygcine am I,'
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' ask d
the King

She answer'd, 'These be secret things,'
and sign'd

To those two sons to pass and let them be
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Spiang out, and follow'd by his flying hau
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw
But Modied laid his eu beside the doois,
And there half heaid, the same that
afterward

Struck for the throne, and striking found
his doom

And then the Queen made answer
'What know I?

For dark my mother was in eyes and hau,
And dark in hau and eyes am I, and dark
Was Gorlois, yer and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness, but this King is
fu

Beyond the race of Butons and of men
Moreover, always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the drowning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear hei say,
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the ough ways of the
world"

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye
such a cry?

But when did Arthur chance upon thee
first?"

'O King!' she cried, 'and I will tell
thee true

He found me first when yet a little mud
Beaten I had been for a little fault

Whereof I was not guilty, and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of
heath,

And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead,
and he—

I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say,
can walk

Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side
And spoke sweet words, and comforted
my heart,

And dried my tears, being a child with me
And many a time he came, and comforted
As I grew greater grew with me, and sad
At times he seem'd, and sid with him
as I,

Stien too at times, and then I loved him
not,

But sweet again, and then I loved him
well

And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for
me,

For then I surely thought he would be
king

'But let me tell thee now another tale
For Bley, our Merlin's master, as they
say,

Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the
mage,

And when I enter'd told me that himself
And Merlin ever scived about the King,
Uther, before he died, and on the night
When Uther in Tintagel past away
Morning and waiting for an heir, the two
Left the still King, and passing forth to
breathe,

Then from the castle gateway by the
chasm

Descending thro' the dismal night—a
night

In which the bounds of heaven and earth
were lost—

Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape
thereof

A^c dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern

Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen. And then
the two

Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great
sea fall,

Wave after wave, each mightier than the
last,

Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the
deep

And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
And down the wave and in the flame was
borne

A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
Who stoopt and caught the babe, and
cried "The King!

Here is an heir for Uther!" And the
fringe

Of that great breaker, sweeping up the
strand,

Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
And all at once all round him rose in fire,
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
Free sky and stars: "And this same
child," he said,

"Is he who reigns; nor could I part in
peace

Till this were told." And saying this the
scer

Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of
death,

Not ever to be question'd any more
Save on the further side; but when I met
Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were
truth—

The shining dragon and the naked child
Descending in the glory of the seas—
He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
In riddling triplets of old time, and said:

"Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in
the sky!

A young man will be wiser by and by;
An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the
lea!

And truth is this to me, and that to thee;

And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, sun, and rain! and the free
blossom blows:

Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he
who knows?

From the great deep to the great deep he
goes."

'So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but
thou

Fear not to give this King thine only child,
Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing
Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old
Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of
men,

And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
For comfort after their wage-work is done,
Speak of the King; and Merlin in our
time

Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Tho' men may wound him that he will
not die,

But pass, again to come; and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
Till these and all men hail him for their
king.'

Shespake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
But musing 'Shall I answer yea or nay?'
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept,
and saw,

Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom
-king,

Now looming, and now lost; and on the
slope

The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd
was driven,

Fire glimpsed; and all the land from
roof and rick,

In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with
the haze

And made it thicker; while the phantom
king

Sent out at times a voice; and here or there
Stood one who pointed toward the voice,
the rest

Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of
ours,

No son of Uther, and no king of ours,'
Till with a wink his dream was changed,
the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became
As nothing, but the King stood out in
heaven,
Crown'd And Leodogian awoke, and
sent
Ulfius, and Brastias and Bedivere,
Back to the court of Arthur answering yet

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom
he loved
And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride
forth
And bring the Queen,—and watch'd him
from the gates
And Lancelot past away among the
flowers,
(For then was latter April) and return'd
Among the flowers, in May, with Guine-
vere

To whom arrived, by Dubric the high
saint,
Chief of the church in Britun, and before
The stateliest of her altars shines, the
King

That morn was married, while in stainless
white,

The fair beginnings of a nobler time,
And glorying in their vows and him, his
knights

Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy
For shone the fields of May thro' open
door,

Thesacred altar blossom'd white with May,
The Sun of May descended on their King,
They gazed on all earth's beauty in their
Queen,

Roll'd incense, and there past along the
hymns

A voice as of the waters, while the two
Swore at the shrine of Christ a deathless
love

And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is
mine

Let chance what will, I love thee to the
death'

To whom the Queen replied with drooping
eyes,

'King and my lord, I love thee to the
death'

And holy Dubric spread his hands and
spoke,

'Reign ye, and live and love, and make
the world

Other, and may thy Queen be one with
thee,

And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their
King'

So Dubric said, but when they left the
shrine

Great Lords from Rome before the portal
stood,

In scornful stillness gazing as they past,
Then while they paced a city all on fire

With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets
blew,

And Arthur's knighthood sang before the
King—

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white
with May,

Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd
away'

Blow thro' the living world—"Let the
King reign"

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in
Arthur's realm?

Flash brand and lance, full battleaxe upon
helm,

Full battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the
King reign

'Strike for the King and live! his
knights have heard

That God hath told the King a secret
word

Full battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the
King reign

'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from
the dust

Blow trumpet! live the strength and die
the lust'

Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let
the King reign

‘Strike for the King and die ! and if
thou diest,
The King is King, and ever wills the
highest.

Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let
the King reign.

‘Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his
May !
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day !
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let
the King reign.

‘The King will follow Christ, and we
the King
In whom high God hath breathed a secret
thing.

Fall battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the
King reign.’

So sang the knighthood, moving to their
hall.
There at the banquet those great Lords
from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Strode in, and claim’d their tribute as of
yore.

But Arthur spake, ‘Behold, for these have
sworn

To wage my wars, and worship me their
King ;

The old order changeth, yielding place
to new ;

And we that fight for our fair father
Christ,

Seeing that ye be grown too weak and
old

To drive the heathen from your Roman
wall,

No tribute will we pay :’ so those great
lords

Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove
with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a
space

Were all one will, and thro’ that strength
the King

Drew in the petty principedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles over-
came

The heathen hordes, and made a realm
and reign’d.

THE ROUND TABLE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.
GERAINT AND ENID.
MERLIN AND VIVIAN.
LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

THE HOLY GRAIL.
PELLEAS AND ETGARRE.
THE LAST TOURNAMENT.
GUINEVERE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.

THE last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted
Pine

Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl’d away.
‘How he went down,’ said Gareth, ‘as
a false knight

Or evil king before my lance if lance
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—
And yet thou art but swollen with cold
snows

And mine is living blood : thou dost His
will,

The Maker’s, and not knowest, and I
that know,

Have strength and wit, in my good
mother’s hall

Linger with vacillating obedience,
Prison’d, and kept and coax’d and
whistled to—

Since the good mother holds me still a
child !

Good mother is bad mother unto me !
A worse were better ; yet no worse
would I.

Heaven yield her for it, but in me put
force

To weary her ears with one continuous
prayer,

Until she let me fly discaiged to sweep
In ever highering eagle-circles up
To the great Sun of Gloiy, and thence
swoop

Down upon all things base, and dash
them dead,

A knight of Arthur, working out his will,
To cleanse the world Why, Gawain,
when he came

With Modred hither in the summer-time,
Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven
knight

Modred for want of worthue was the
judge

Then I so shook him in the saddle, he
said,

"Thou hast half prevail'd agunst mc,"
said so—he—

Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute,
For he is alway sullen what care I?

And Gareth went, and hovering round
her chair

Ask'd, 'Mother, tho' ye count me still
the child,

Sweet mother, do ye love the child?'
She laugh'd,

'Thou art but a wild goose to question
it'

'Then, mother, an ye love the child,' he
said,

'Being a goose and rather tame than wild,
Hear the child's story' 'Yea, my well-
beloved,

An 'twere but of the goose and golden
eggs'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling
eyes,

'Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of
mine

Was finer gold than any goose can lay,
For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid
Almost beyond eye reach, on such a palm
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours
And there was ever haunting round the
palm

A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw
The splendour sparkling from aloft, and
thought

"An I could climb and lay my hand upon
it,

Then were I wealthier than a leash of
kings"

But ever when he reach'd a hand to climb,
One, that had loved him from his child
hood, caught

And stry'd him, "Climb not lest thou
break thy neck,

I charge thee by my love," and so the boy,
Sweet mother, neither climb, nor brake
his neck,

But brake his very heart in pining for it,
And past away'

To whom the mother said,
'True love, sweet son, had ask'd himself
and climb'd,

And handed down the golden treasure to
him'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling
eyes,

'Gold?' said I gold?—ay then, why he,
or she,

Or whoso'er it was, or half the world
Had ventured—*had* the thing I spake of
been

Mere gold—but this was all of that true
steel,

Whereof they forged the brand Laculibus,
And lightnings ply'd about it in the
storm,

And all the little fowl were flummied at it,
And there were cries and clashings in the
nest,

That sent him from his senses let me go'

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and
said,

'Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?
Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth
Lies like a log, and all but smould'ring
out'

For ever since when traitor to the King
He fought agunst him in the Barons' war,
And Arthur gave him back his territory,
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies
there

A yet warm corpse, and yet unburnable,

No more ; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks,
 nor knows.
 And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,
 Albeit neither loved with that full love
 I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love :
 Stay therefore thou ; red berries charm
 the bird,
 And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the
 wars,
 Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang
 Of wrench'd or broken limb—an often
 chance
 In those brain-stunning shocks, and
 tourney-falls,
 Frights to my heart ; but stay : follow
 the deer
 By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns ;
 So make thy manhood mightier day by
 day ;
 Sweet is the chase : and I will seek thee
 out
 Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace
 Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone
 year,
 Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness
 I know not thee, myself, nor anything.
 Stay, my best son ! ye are yet more boy
 than man.'

Then Gareth, 'An ye hold me yet for
 child,
 Hear yet once more the story of the child.
 For, mother, there was once a King, like
 ours.
 The prince his heir, when tall and
 marriageable,
 Ask'd for a bride ; and thereupon the
 King
 Set two before him. One was fair,
 strong, arm'd—
 But to be won by force—and many men
 Desired her ; one, good lack, no man
 desired.
 And these were the conditions of the
 King :
 That save he won the first by force, he
 needs
 Must wed that other, whom no man
 desired,
 A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile,

That evermore she long'd to hide herself,
 Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye—
 Yea—some she cleaved to, but they died
 of her.
 And one—they call'd her Fame ; and
 one,—O Mother,
 How can ye keep me telter'd to you—
 Shame !
 Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.
 Follow the deer ? follow the Christ, the
 King,
 Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow
 the King—
 Else, wherefore born ?'

To whom the mother said,
 'Sweet son, for there be many who deem
 him not,
 Or will not deem him, wholly proven
 King—
 Albeit in mine own heart I knew him
 King,
 When I was frequent with him in my
 youth,
 And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted
 him
 No more than he, himself ; but felt him
 mine,
 Of closest kin to me : yet—wilt thou leave
 Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine
 all,
 Life, limbs, for one that is not proven
 King ?
 Stay, till the cloud that settles round his
 birth
 Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son.'

And Gareth answer'd quickly, 'Not
 an hour,
 So that ye yield me—I will walk thro'
 fire,
 Mother, to gain it—your full leave to
 go.
 Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd
 Rome
 From off the threshold of the realm, and
 crush'd
 The Idolaters, and made the people free ?
 Who should be King save him who
 makes us free ?'

So when the Queen, who long had
sought in vain
To break him from the intent to which
he grew,
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,
She answer'd craftily, 'Will ye walk thro'
fire?
Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the
smoke
Ay, go then, in ye must only one proof,
Before thou ask the King to make thee
knight,
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,
Thy mother,—I demand'

And Gareth cried,
'A hard one, or a hundred, so I go
Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to
the quick!'

But slowly spake the mother looking
at him,
'Pounce, thou shalt go disguised to
Arthur's hall,
And hure thyself to serve for merits and
drinks
Among the scullions and the kitchen-
knaves,
And those that hand the dish across the
bar
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to anyone
And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and
a day'

For so the Queen believed that when
her son
Beheld his only way to glory lead
Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage,
Her own true Gareth was too princely
proud
To pass thereby, so should he rest with
her,
Closed in her castle from the sound of
arms

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,
'The thrall in prison may be free in soul,
And I shall see the jousts Thy son am I,
And since thou art my mother, must
obey
I therefore yield me freely to thy will,

For hence will I, disguised, and hure my
self
To serve with scullions and with kitchen
knaves,
Nor tell my name to any—no, not the
King'

Gareth awhile linger'd The mother's
eye
Full of the wistful fear that he would go,
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he
turn'd,
Perplex'd his outward purpose, till an hour,
When waken'd by the wind which with
full voice
Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to
dawn,
He rose, and out of slumber calling two
That still had tended on him from his
bath,
Before the wakeful mother heard him,
went

The three were clad like tillers of the
soil
Southward they set their faces The birds
made
Melody on branch, and melody in mid air
The damp hill slopes were quicken'd into
green,
And the live green had kindled into
flowers,
For it was past the time of Easterday

So, when their feet were planted on
the plain
That broaden'd toward the base of Camel-
lot,
Far off they saw the silver misty moor
Rolling her smoke about the Royal
mount,
That rose between the forest and the field
At times the summit of the high city
flash'd,
At times the spires and turrets half way
down
Peek'd thro' the mist, at times the great
gate shone
Only, that open'd on the field below
Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd

Then those who went with Gareth were
amazed,
One crying, 'Let us go no further, lord
Here is a city of Enchanters, built
By fairy Kings' The second echo'd him,
'Lord, we have heard from our wise man
at home
To Northward, that this King is not the
King,
But only changeling out of Fairyland,
Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery
And Merlin's glamour' Then the first
again,
'Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
But all a vision'

Gareth answer'd them
With laughter, swearing he had glamour
enow
In his own blood, his princedom, youth
and hopes,
To plunge old Merlin in the Arthurian sea,
So push'd them all unwilling toward the
gate
And there was no gate like it under
heaven
For bluefoot on the keystone, which was
lincd
And rippled like an ever fleeting wave,
The Lady of the Lake stood all her dress
Wept from her sides as water flowing away,
But like the cross her great and goodly
arms
Stretch'd under all the cornice and
upheld
And drops of water fell from either hand,
And down from one a sword was hung,
from one
A censer, either worn with wind and
storm,
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish,
And in the space to left of her, and right,
Were Arthur's wars in wend devices done,
New things and old co-twisted, as if Time
Were nothing, so inveterately, that men
Were giddy gazing there, and over all
High on the top were those three Queens,
the friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his
need

Then those with Gareth for so long a
space
Stared at the figures, that at last it seem'd
The dragon boughs and elvish emblem-
ings
Began to move, seethe, twine and curl
they call'd
To Gareth, 'Lord, the gateway is alive'

And Gareth likewise on them fixt his
eyes
So long, that ev'n to him they seem'd to
move
Out of the city a blast of music peal'd
Back from the gate started the three, to
whom
From out thereunder came an ancient
man,
Long-bearded, saying, 'Who be ye, my
sons?'

Then Gareth, 'We be tillers of the soil,
Who leaving share in furrow come to see
The glories of our King but these, my
men,
(Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)
Doubt if the King be King at all, or come
From Fairyland, and whether this be built
By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens,
Or whether there be any city at all,
Or all a vision and this music now
Hath served them both, but tell thou
these the truth'

Then that old Seer made answer play-
ing on him
And saying, 'Son, I have seen the good
ship sail
Keel upward and mast downward in the
heavens,
And solid towers topsy-turvy in air
and here is truth, but an it please thee
not,
Take thou the truth as thou hast told it
me
For truly as thou sayest, a fairy King
And fairy Queens have built the city, son
They came from out a sacred mountain
cleft
Foward the sunrise, each with harp in
hand,

And built it to the music of then harps
And as thou sayest it is enchanted, son,
For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King, tho' some there be that
hold

The King a shadow, and the city real
Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou
pass

Beneath this archway, then wilt thou
become

A thrall to his enchantments, for the King
Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the
which

No man can keep, but, so thou dread to
swear,

Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide
Without, among the cattle of the field
For an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is
built

To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever '

Gareth spake
Anger'd, ' Old Master, reverence thine
own beard

That looks as white as utter truth, and
seems

Wellnigh as long as thou art statured tall '
Why mockest thou the stranger that hath
been

To thee said spoken ?'

But the Seer replied,
' Know ye not then the Riddling of the
Bards ?

" Confusion, and illusion, and relation,
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion " ?

I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,
And all that see thee, for thou art not who
Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou
art

And now thou goest up to mock the King,
Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie '

Unmockingly the mocker ending here
Turn'd to the right, and past along the
plain,

Whom Gareth looking after said, ' My
men,

Our one white lie sits like a little ghost
Here on the threshold of our enterprise
Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I
Well, we will make amends '

With all good cheer
He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with
his twin

Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings who did their days in
stone,

Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at
Arthur's court,

Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and every-
where

At Arthur's ordinance, tipped with lessening
perk

And pinnacle, and had made it spire to
heaven

And ever and anon a knight would pass
Outward, or inward to the hall his arms
Clash'd, and the sound was good to
Gareth's ear

And out of bowers and casement shyly
glanced

Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of
love,

And all about a healthful people slept
As in the presence of a glorious king

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld
Far over heads in that long vaulted hall
The splendour of the presence of the
King

Throned, and delivering doom — and
look'd no more —

But felt his young heart hammering in his
ears,

And thought, ' For this half shadow of a
lie

The truthful King will doom me when I
speak '

Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred, saw not one
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes
Of those tall knights, that ranged about
the throne,

Clear honour shining like the dewy star

Of dawn, and faith in then great King,
with pure
Affection, and the light of victory,
And glory gam'd, and evermore to gain

Then came a widow crying to the King,
'A boon, Sir King ' Thy father, Uther,
left

From my dead lord a field with violence
For howsoe'er at first he proffer'd gold,
Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,
We yielded not, and then he reft us of it
Perforce, and left us neither gold nor field '

Said Arthur, 'Whether would ye
gold or field?'
To whom the woman weeping, 'Nay, my
lord,
The field was pleasant in my husband's
eye '

And Arthur, 'Have thy pleasant field
again,
And thrice the gold for Uther's use
thereof,
According to the years No boon is here,
But justice, so thy say be proven true
Accused, who from the wrongs his father
did
Would shape himself a right '

And while she past,
Came yet another widow crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King ' Thine enemy, King,
am I

With thine own hand thou slewest my
dear lord,

A knight of Uther in the Britons' war,
When Lot and many another rose and
fought

Against thee, saying thou wert basely
born

I held with these, and loathe to ask thee
aught

Yet lo ' my husband's brother had my
son

Thru'd in his castle, and hath starved
him dead

And standeth seized of that inheritance
Which thou that slewest the sire hast left
the son

So tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,
Grant me some knight to do the battle
for me,
Kill the foul thief, and wick me for my
son '

Then strode a good knight forward,
crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King ' I am her kinsman, I
Give me to right her wrong, and slay the
man '

Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal, and
cried,
'A boon, Sir King ' ev'n that thou grant
her none,
This railer, that hath mock'd thee in full
hall—
None, or the wholesome boon of gyve
and gag '

But Arthur, 'We sit King, to help the
wrong'd
Thio' all our realm The woman loves
her lord

Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and
hates '

The kings of old had doom'd thee to the
flames,

Aurelius Emrys would have scourged thee
dead,

And Uther slit thy tongue but get thee
hence—

Lest that rough humour of the kings of
old

Return upon me ' Thou that rit her kin,
Go likewise, lay him low and slay him
not,

But bring him here, that I may judge the
right,

According to the justice of the King
Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King
Who lived and died for men, the man
shall die '

Then came in hall the messenger of
Mark,

A name of evil saviour in the land,
The Cornish king In either hand he
boic

What dazzled all, and shone far oft as
shines

A field of chaïlock in the sudden sun
Between two showers, a cloth of palest
gold,
Which down he laid before the throne,
and knelt,
Delivering, that his lord, the vassal king,
Was ev'n upon his way to Camelot,
For having heard that Arthur of his grace
Had made his goodly cousin, Tustiam,
knight,
And, for himself was of the greater state,
Being a king, he trusted his liege lord
Would yield him this large honour all the
more,
So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of
gold,
In token of true heart and fealty

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to
rend
In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth
An oak-tree smoulder'd there 'The
goodly knight'
What 'shall the shield of Mark stand
among these?'
For, midway down the side of that long
hall
A stately pile,—whereof along the front,
Some blazon'd, some but carved, and
some blank,
There ran a treble range of stony
shields,—
Rose, and high arching overbrow'd the
hearth
And under every shield a knight was
named
For this was Arthur's custom in his hall,
When some good knight had done one
noble deed,
His arms were carved only, but if twain
His arms were blazon'd also, but if none
The shield was blank and bare without a
sign
Saving the name beneath, and Gueth
saw
The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and
bright,
And Modred's blank as death, and
Arthur cried
To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth

'More like are we to receive him of his
crown
Than make him knight because men call
him king
The kings we found, ye know we stry'd
then hands
From war among themselves, but left
them kings,
Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,
Truth speaking, brave, good liveris, them
we enroll'd
Among us, and they sit within our hall
But Mark hath tarnish'd the great name
of king,
As Mark would sully the low state of churl
And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,
Return, and meet, and hold him from
our eyes,
Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,
Silenced for ever—carven—a man of
plots,
Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside am-
bushings—
No fault of thine let Kay the seneschal
Look to thy wants, and send thee satis-
fied—
Accused, who strikes not lets the hand
be seen'

And many another suppliant crying
came
With noise of lance wrought by barst
and man,
And evermore a knight would ride away

Last, Gueth leaning both hands heavily
Down on the shoulders of the twain, his
men,
Approach'd between them toward the
King, and ask'd,
'A boon, Sir King (his voice was all
ashamed),
For see ye not how weak and hunger worn
I seem—leaning on these? grant me to
serve
For meat and drink among thy kitchen
knaves
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my
name
Hereafter I will fight'

To him the King,
 'A goodly youth and worth a goodlier
 boon !
 But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must
 Kay,
 The master of the meats and drinks, be
 thine '

He rose and past, then Kay, a man
 of mien
 Wan sallow as the plant that feels itself
 Root bitten by white lichen,

'Lo ye now !
 This fellow hath broken from some Abbey,
 where,
 God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,
 Ifowever that might chance ! but an he
 wolk,
 Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,
 And sleeker shall he shine than any hog '

Then Lancelot standing neu, 'Sir
 Seneschal,
 Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray,
 and all the hounds,
 A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost
 not know
 Broad brows and fair, fluent hair and fine,
 High nose, a nostril large and fine, and
 hands
 Large, fair and fine !—Some young lad's
 mystery—
 But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy
 Is noble natured Treat him with all
 grace,
 Lest he should come to shame thy judging
 of him '

* Then Kay, 'What murmur'st thou of
 mystery ?
 Think ye this fellow will poison the
 King's dish ?
 Nay, for he spake too fool like mystery !
 Tut, an the lad were noble, he had ask'd
 For horse and armour fair and fine,
 forsooth !
 Sir Fine face, Sir Fair-hands ? but see
 thou to it
 That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some
 fine day
 Undo thee not—and leave my man to me '

So Gareth all for glory underwent
 The sooty yoke of kitchen vassalage,
 Ate with young lads his portion by the
 door,
 And couch'd at night with gummy kitchen-
 knives

And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,
 But Kay the seneschal who loved him not
 Would hustle and harry him, and labour
 him

Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set
 To turn the broach, draw water, or hew
 wood,

On grosser tasks, and Gareth bow'd
 himself

With all obedience to the King, and
 wrought

All kind of service with a noble ease
 That graced the lowliest act in doing it
 And when the thralls had talk among
 themselves,

And one would praise the love that link'd
 the King

And Lancelot—how the King had saved
 his life

In battle twice, and Lancelot once the
 King's—

For Lancelot was the first in Tournament,
 But Arthur mightiest on the battle field—

Gareth was glad On if some other told,
 How once the wandering forester at dawn,
 Faw over the blue tains and hazy seas,
 On Caer Ebor's highest found the King,
 A naked babe, of whom the Prophet spake,
 'He passes to the Isle Avilion,
 He passes and is heal'd and cannot die'—
 Gareth was glad But if then talk were
 foul,

Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,
 Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud
 That first they mock'd, but, after, rever-
 enced him

On Gareth telling some prodigious tale
 Of knights, who shed a red life bubbling
 way

His twenty folds of twisted dragon, held
 All in a gap mouth'd circle his good mates
 Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,
 Churn'd, till Sir Kay, the seneschal,
 would come

Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind
Among dead leaves, and drive them all
apart

O! when the thralls had spoit among
themselves,

So there were any trial of mastery,
He, by two yuds in casting bu or stone
Was counted best, and if there chanced
a joust,

So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,
Would hurry thither, and when he saw
the knights

Clash like the coming and retuning wave,
And the spear spring, and good hoist
reel, the boy

Was half beyond himself for ecstasy

So for a month he wrought among the
thralls,
But in the weeks that follow'd, the good
Queen,

Repentant of the word she made him
swear,

And saddening in her childless castle, sent,
Between the in crescent and de crescent
moon,

Arms for her son, and loosed him from
his vow

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of
Lot

With whom he used to play at tourney
once,

When both were children, and in lonely
haunts

Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,
And each at either dash from either end—
Shame never made gul redder than Gareth
joy

He laugh'd, he sprang 'Out of the
smoke, at once

I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee—
These news be mine, none other's—nay,
the King's—

Descend into the city ' whereon he sought
The King alone, and found, and told him
all

'I have stagger'd thy strong Gawain in
a tilt

For pastime, yet, he said it joust can I

Make me thy knight—in secret ' let my
name

Be hidd'n, and give me the first quest, I
spring

Like flame from ashes '

Here the King's calm eye
Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush,
and bow

Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd
him,

'Son, the good mother let me know thee
here,

And sent her wish that I would yield thee
thine

Make thee my knight? my knights are
sworn to vows

Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King '

Then Gareth, lightly springing from
his knees,

'My King, for hardihood I can promise
thee

For uttermost obedience make demand
Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,
No mellow master of the meats and
drinks '

And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
But love I shall, God willing '

And the King—
'Make thee my knight in secret? yea,
but he,

Our noblest brother, and our truest man,
And one with me in all, he needs must
know '

'Let Lancelot know, my King, let
Lancelot know,
Thy noblest and thy truest '

And the King—
'But wherefore would ye men should
wonder at you?

Nay, rather for the sake of me, than
King,

And the deed's sake my knighthood do
the deed,

Than to be noised of '

Merrily Gareth ask'd,
'Have I not earn'd my cake in baking
of it ?

Let be my name until I make my name !
My deeds will speak it is but for a day '
So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm
Smiled the great King, and half unwill-
ingly

Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to
him

Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,
'I have given him the first quest he is
not proven

Look therefore when he calls for this in
hall,

Thou get to horse and follow him faraway
Cover the lions on thy shield, and see
Far as thou mayest, he be not taken nor
slain '

Then that same day there past into 'he
hall

A damsel of high lineage, and a brow
May-blossom, and a cheek of apple
blossom,

Hawk eyes, and lightly was her slender
nose

Tip tilted like the petal of a flower,
She into hall past with her page and cued,

'O King, for thou hast driven the foe
without,

See to the foe within ! bridge, ford, beset
By bandits, everyone that owns a tower
The Lord for half a league Why sit ye
there ?

Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were
a king,

Till even the lonest hold were all as free
From cursed bloodshed, as thine a'tai
cloth

From that best blood it is a sin to spill '

'Comfort thyself,' said Arthur, 'I not
mind

Rest so my knighthood keep the vows
they swore,

The wastest moorland of our realm shall
be

Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall
What is thy name ? thy need ?

'My name ?' she said—
'Lynette my name, noble, my need, a
knight

To combat for my sister, Lyonois,
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,
And comely, yea, and comelier than my
self

She lives in Castle Perilous a live
Runs in three loops about her living
place,

And o'er it are three passings, and three
knights

Defend the passings, biethien, and a
fourth

And of that four the mightiest, holds her
stay'd

In her own castle, and so besieges her
To break her will, and make her wed with
him

And but delays his purport till thou send
To do the battle with him, thy chief man
Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthrow,
Then wed, with glory but she will not
wed

Save whom she loveth, on a holy life
Now therefore have I come for Lancelot '

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd,
'Damsel, ye know this Order lives to
crush

All wrongers of the Realm But say, these
four,

Who be they ? What the fashion of the
men ?

'They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
The fashion of that old knight errantry
Who ride abroad and do but what they
will,

Courteous or bestial from the moment,
such

As have nor law nor king, and three of
these

Proud in their fantasy call themselves the
Dry,

Morning-Star, and Noon Sun, and Even-
ing Star,

Being strong fools, and never a whit more
wise

The fourth, who alway woth arm'd in
black,

A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
He names himself the Night and oftener
Death,

And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,
And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
To show that who may slay or scape the
three

Slain by himself shall enter endless night.
And all these four befools, but mighty men,
And therefore am I come for Lancelot.'

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he
rose,
A head with kindling eyes above the
throng,

'A boon, Sir King—this quest!' then—
for he mark'd

Kay near him groaning like a wounded
bull—

'Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-
knave am I,

And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks
am I,

And I can topple over a hundred such.
Thy promise, King,' and Arthur glancing
at him,

Brought down a momentary brow.
'Rough, sudden,

And pardonable, worthy to be knight—
Go therefore,' and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame,
pride, wrath

Slew the May-white: she lifted either arm,
'Fie on thee, King! I ask'd for thy chief
knight,

And thou hast given me but a kitchen-
knave.'

Then ere a man in hall could stay her,
turn'd,

Fled down the lane of access to the King,
Took horse, descended the slope street,
and past

The weird white gate, and paused without,
beside

The field of tourney, murmuring 'kitchen-
knave.'

Now two great entries open'd from the
hall,

At one end one, that gave upon a range

Of level pavement where the King would
pace

At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
And down from this a lordly stairway
sloped

Till lost in blowing trees and tops of
towers;

And out by this main doorway past the
King.

But one was counter to the hearth, and
rose

High that the highest-crested helm could
ride

Therethro' nor graze: and by this entry
fled

The damsel in her wrath, and on to this
Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the
door

King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a
town,

A warhorse of the best, and near it stood
The two that out of north had follow'd
him:

This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that
held

The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth
loosed

A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to
heel,

A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,
And from it like a fuel-smother'd fire,

That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and
flash'd as those

Dull-coated things, that making slide
apart

Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there
burns

A jewell'd harness, ere they pass and fly.
So Gareth ere he parted flash'd in arms.

Then as he donn'd the helm, and took the
shield

And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of
grain

Storm-strengthen'd on a windy site, and
tipt

With trenchant steel, around him slowly
prest

The people, while from out of kitchen came
The thralls in throng, and seeing who had
work'd

Lustier than any, and whom they could
but love,
Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and
cried,
God bless the King, and all his fellow
ship !
And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode
Down the slope street, and past without
the gate

So Gareth past with joy, but as the cur
Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his
cause
Be cool'd by fighting, follows, being
named,
His owner, but remembers all, and growls
Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door
Mutter'd in scorn of Gareth whom he used
To harry and hustle

'Bound upon a quest
With hoise and arms—the King hath past
his time—
My scullion knave ! Thialks to your work
again,
For in your fire be low ye kindle mine !
Will there be dawn in West and eve in
East ?
Begone !—my knave !—belike and like
enow
Some old herd blow not heed'd in his
youth
So shook his wits they wander in his
prime—
Crazed ! How the villain lifted up his
voice,
Nor shamed to brawl himself a kitchen
knave
Tut he was tame and meek enow with
me,
Till peacock'd up with Lancelot's noticing
Well—I will afeer my loud knave, and
lain
Whether he know me for his master yet
Out of the smoke he came, and so my
lance
Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the
mire—
Thence, if the King awaken from his craze,
Into the smoke again'

But Lancelot said,
'Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the
King,
For that did never he whereon ye rail,
But ever meekly served the King in thee ?
Abide take counsel, for this lad is great
And lusty, and knowing both of lance and
sword'
'Tut, tell not me,' said Kay, 'ye are
overfine
To mar stout knaves with foolish counte-
sies'
Then mounted, on this silent faces rode
Down the slope city, and out beyond the
gate

But by the field of tourney lingering yet
Mutter'd the damsel, 'Wherefore did the
King
Scorn me ? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt,
at least
He might have yielded to me one of those
Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,
Rather than—O sweet heaven ! O fie
upon him—
His kitchen knave'

To whom Sir Gareth drew
(And there were none but few goodlier
than he)
Shining in arms, 'Damsel, the quest is mine
Lead, and I follow' She thereat, as one
That smells a foul flesh'd again in the
holt,
And deems it caution of some woodland
thing,
Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling,
'Hence !
Avoid, thou smell'est all of kitchen-grease
And look who comes behind,' for there
was Kay
'Knowest thou not me ? thy master ? I
am Kay
We lack thee by the health'

And Gareth to him,
'Master no more ! too well I know thee,
ay—
The most ungente knight in Arthur's
hall'

'Have at thee then,' said Kay: they
shock'd, and Kay
Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again,
'Lead, and I follow,' and fast away she
fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse
Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,
Perforce she stay'd, and overtaken spoke.

'What doest thou, scullion, in my
fellowship?
Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the
more
Or love thee better, that by some device
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,
Thou hast overthrown and slain thy
master—thou!—
Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon!—
to me
Thou smell'st all of kitchen as before.'

'Damsel,' Sir Gareth answer'd gently,
'say
Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,
I leave not till I finish this fair quest,
Or die therefore.'

'Ay, wilt thou finish it?
Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he
talks!
The listening rogue hath caught the man-
ner of it.
But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with,
knave,
And then by such a one that thou for all
The kitchen brewis that was ever supt
Shalt not once dare to look him in the
face.'

'I shall assay,' said Gareth with a smile
That madden'd her, and away she flash'd
again
Down the long avenues of a boundless
wood,
And Gareth following was again beknaved.

'Sir Kitchen-knave, I have miss'd the
only way
Where Arthur's men are set along the
wood;

The wood is nigh as full of thieves' as
leaves:

If both be slain, I am rid of thee; but yet,
Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit of
thine?

Fight, an thou canst: I have miss'd the
only way.'

So till the dusk that follow'd evensong
Rode on the two, reviler and reviled;
Then after one long slope was mounted,
saw,

Bowl-shaped, thro' tops of many thousand
pines

A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink
To westward—in the deeps whereof a
mere,

Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,
Under the half-dead sunset glared; and
shouts

Ascended, and there brake a servingman
Flying from out of the black wood, and
crying,

'They have bound my lord to cast him in
the mere.'

Then Gareth, 'Bound am I to right the
wrong'd,

But straitlier bound am I to bide with
thee.'

And when the damsels spake contempt-
uously,

'Lead, and I follow,' Gareth cried again,
'Follow, I lead!' so down among the
pines

He plunged; and there, blackshadow'd
nigh the mere,

And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and
reed,

Saw six tall men haling a seventh along,
A stone about his neck to drown him
in it.

Three with good blows he quieted, but
three

Fled thro' the pines; and Gareth loosed
the stone

From off his neck, then in the mere beside
Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere.

Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free
feet

Set him, a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

'Well that ye came, or else these caitiff
 rogues
 Had wreak'd themselves on me ; good
 cause is theirs
 To hate me, for my wont hath ever been
 To catch my thief, and then like vermin
 here
 Drown him, and with a stone about his
 neck ;
 And under this wan water many of them
 Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,
 And rise, and flickering in a grimly light
 Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have
 saved a life
 Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this
 wood.
 And fain would I reward thee worship-
 fully.
 What guerdon will ye ?'

Gareth sharply spake,
 'None ! for the deed's sake have I done
 the deed,
 In uttermost obedience to the King.
 But wilt thou yield this damsel harbour-
 age ?'

Whereat the Baron saying, 'I well
 believe
 You be of Arthur's Table,' a light laugh
 Broke from Lynette, 'Ay, truly of a truth,
 And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-
 knave !—
 But deem not I accept thee aught the
 more,
 Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit
 Down on a rout of craven foresters.
 A thresher with his flail had scatter'd them.
 Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen
 still.
 But an this lord will yield us harbourage,
 Well.'

So she spake. A league beyond the
 wood,
 All in a full-fair manor and a rich,
 His towers where that day a feast had
 been
 Held in high hall, and many a viand left,
 And many a costly cate, received the
 three.

And there they placed a peacock in his
 pride
 Before the damsel, and the Baron set
 Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

'Meseems, that here is much dis-
 courtesy,
 Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.
 Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur's
 hall,
 And pray'd the King would grant me
 Lancelot
 To fight the brotherhood of Day and
 Night—

The last a monster unsubduable
 Of any save of him for whom I call'd—
 Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-
 knave,

"The quest is mine ; thy kitchen-knave
 am I,
 And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks
 am I."

Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,
 "Go therefore," and so gives the quest
 to him—

Him—here—a villain fitter to stick swine
 Than ride abroad redressing women's
 wrong,
 Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman.'

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed,
 the lord
 Now look'd at one and now at other, left
 The damsel by the peacock in his pride,
 And, seating Gareth at another board,
 Sat down beside him, ate and then began.

'Friend, whether thou be kitchen-
 knave, or not,
 Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,
 And whether she be mad, or else the
 King,
 Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,
 I ask not : but thou strikest a strong
 stroke,
 For strong thou art and goodly there-
 withal,
 And saver of my life ; and therefore now,
 For here be mighty men to joust with,
 weigh

Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel
back
To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King
Thy pardon, I but speak for thine avail,
The savor of my life;

And Gareth said,
'Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,
Despite of Day and Night and Death and
Hell';

So when, next morn, the lord whose
life he saved
Had, some brief space, convey'd them on
their way
And left them with God speed, Sir Gareth
spoke,
'Lead, and I follow'—Haughtily she
replied,

'I fly no more I allow thee for an
hour
Lion and stoat have isled together, knave,
In time of flood Nay, furthermore,
methinks
Some ruth is mine for thee Back wilt
thou, fool?
For hard by here is one will overthrow
And slay thee then will I to count again,
And shame the King for only yielding
me
My champion from the ashes of his hearth'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd courteously,
'Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed
Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt
find
My fortunes all as fair as hers who lay
Among the ashes and wedded the King's
son'

Then to the shore of one of those long
loops
Wherethro' the serpent river coil'd, they
came
Rough thicketed were the banks and
steep, the stream
Full, narrow, this a bridge of single arc
look at a leap, and on the further side
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold

In streaks and rays, and all Lent lily in
hue,
Save that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering
And therefore the lawless warrior paced
Unarm'd, and calling, 'Damsel, is this
he,
The champion thou hast brought from
Arthur's hall?
For whom we let thee pass' 'Nay, nay,'
she said,
'Sir Morning Star The King in utter
scorn
Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee
here
His kitchen-knave and look thou to
thyself
See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
And slay thee unarm'd he is not knight
but I have'

Then at his call, 'O daughters of the
Dawn,
And servants of the Morning Star, ap-
proach,
Arm me,' from out the silken curtain folds
Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair
girls
In gilt and rosy raiment came their feet
In dewy grasses glisten'd, and the hair
All over glauced with dewdrop or with
gem
Like sprinkles in the stone Adventure
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave
a shield
Blue also, and thereon the morning star
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was
brought,
Glorious, and in the stream beneath him
shone
Immingled with Heaven's azure wav-
ingly,
The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star

Then she that watch'd him, 'Wherefore
stare ye so?
Thou shakest in thy fear there yet is
time

Flee down the valley before he get to
horse

Who will cry shame? Thou art not
knight but knave'

Said Gareth, 'Damsel, whether knave
or knight,
Far liefer had I fight a score of times
Than hear thee so missay me and revile
Fair words were best for him who fights
for thee,

But truly foul 're better, for they send
That strength of anger thro' mine arms,
I know

That I shall overthrow him'

And he that bore
The steed, being mounted, cried from o'er
the bridge,

'A kitchen knave, and sent in scorn of me'
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with
scorn

For this were shame to do him further
wrong

Thou set him on his feet, and take his
horse

And arms, and so return him to the
King

Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly,
knave

Avoid for it beseemeth not a knave
To ride with such a lady'

'Dog, thou liest
I sprung from loftier lineage than thine
own'

He spake, and all at fiery speed the two
Shook'd on the central bridge, and either
spear

Bent but not brake, and either knight it
once,

Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,
Fell, as if dead, but quickly rose and
drew,

And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his
brand

He drove his enemy backward down the
bridge,

The damsel crying, 'Well-stricken,
kitchen knave!'

Till Gareth's shield was cloven, but one
stroke

Laid him that clove it grovelling on the
ground

Then cried the fall'n, 'Take not my
life I yield'

And Gareth, 'So this damsel ask it of me
Good—I accord it easily as a grace'

She reddening, 'Insolent scullion I of
thee?

I bound to thee for any favour ask'd'

'Then shall he die' And Gareth there
unlaced

His helmet as to slay him, but she shriek'd,
'Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay
One nobler than thyself'

'Damsel, thy
charge

Is an abounding pleasure to me Knight,
Thy life is thine at her command Arise
And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say
His kitchen knave hath sent thee See
thou crave

His pardon for thy breaking of his laws
Myself, when I return, will plead for thee
Thy shield is mine—farewell, and,
damsel, thou,

Lead, and I follow'

And fast away she fled
Then when he came upon her, spake,

'Methought,
Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on
the bridge

The savour of thy kitchen came upon me
A little further but the wind hath
changed

Iscent it twenty-fold' And then she sang,
"O morning star" (not that tall felon there

Whom thou by sorcery or unhappiness
Or some device, hast foully overthrown),

"O morning star that smilest in the blue,
O star, my morning dream hath proven
true,

Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled
on me"

'But thou begone, take counsel, and
away,

For hard by here is one that guards a
ford—

Theseccond brother in theen fool's puable—
Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot
Care not for shame thou art not knight
but knave '

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd, laugh-
ingly,
' Parables? Hear a parable of the knave
When I was kitchen knave among the rest
Fieice was the hearth, and one of my
co mtes
Own'd a rough dog, to whom he cast his
coat,
"Guard it," and there was none to meddle
with it
And such a coat art thou, and thee the
King
Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,
To worry, and not to flee—and—knight
or knave—
The knave that doth thee service as full
knight
Is all as good, meseems, as any knight
Toward thy sister's freeing '

' Ay, Sir Knave '
Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a
knight,
Being but knave, I hate thee all the more '

' Fur damsel, you should worship me
the more,
That, being but knave, I throw thine
enemies '

' Ay, ay, ' she said, ' but thou shalt meet
thy match '

So when they touch'd the second river
loop,
Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday
Sun
Beyond a raging shallow As if the flower,
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,
Ten thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the
fieice shield,
All sun, and Gareth's eyes had flying
blots
Before them when he turn'd from watch-
ing him

He from beyond the roaring shallow
roar'd,
' What doest thou, brother, in my marches
heic? '
And she athwart the shallow shall'd again,
' Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's
hall
Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath
his arms '
' Ugh! ' cried the Sun, and vizioung up a
red
And cipher face of rounded foolishness,
Push'd horse across the foamings of the
ford,
Whom Gareth met midstream no room
was there
For lance or tourney skill four strokes
they struck
With sword, and these were mighty, the
new knight
Had seen he might be shamed, but as the
Sun
Heaved up a ponderous arm to stifle the
fifth,
The hoof of his horse slept in the stream,
the stream
Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the
ford,
So drew him home, but he that fought
no more,
As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,
Yielded, and Gareth sent him to the
King

' Myself when I return will plead for thee '
' I ead, and I follow ' Quietly she led
' Hath not the good wind, drumsel, changed
again? '

' Nay, not a point nor art thou victor
here
There lies a ridge of slate across the ford,
His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I
saw it

' "O Sun" (not this strong fool whom
thou, Sir Knave,
Hast overthrown thine own unhappiness),
"O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or
pain,

O moon, that layest all to sleep again,
Shine sweetly twice my love hath smiled
on me "

'What knowest thou of lovesong or of
love ?

Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly
born,

Thou hast a pleasant presence Yea,
perchance,—

"O dewy flowers that open to the
sun,

O dewy flowers that close when day is
done,

Blow sweetly twice my love hath smiled
on me "

'What knowest thou of flowers, except,
belike,

To garnish meats with ? hath not our
good King

Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchen
dom,

A foolish love for flowers ? what stick ye
round

The pasty ? wherewithal deck the boy's
head ?

Flowers ? nay, the boy hath rosemaies
and bry

"O buds, that warble to the morning
sky,

O buds that warble as the day goes by,
Sing sweetly twice my love hath smiled
on me "

'What knowest thou of buds, lark,
mavis, meile,

Linnet ? what dream ye when they utter
forth

May-music growing with the growing
light,

Their sweet sun worship ? these be for the
sunny

(So runs thy fancy) these be for the spit,
Larding and basting Sec thou have not
now

Landed thy last, except thou turn and fly
There stands the third fool of them

illegoys '

For there beyond a bridge of tieble
bow,

All in a rose-red from the west, and all
Naked it seem'd, and glowing in the broad
Deep dimpled current underneath, the
knight,

That named himself the Star of Evening,
stood

And Gareth, 'Wherefore waits the
madman there

Naked in open dayshine ?' 'Nay,' she
cried,

'Not naked, only wrapt in harden'd skins
That fit him like his own, and so ye cleave
His armour off him, these will turn the
blade '

Then the third brother shouted o'er the
bridge,

'O brother star, why shine ye here so low ?
Thy ward is higher up but have ye slain
The damsel's champion ?' and the damsel
cried,

'No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's
heaven

With all disaster unto thine and thee '

For both thy younger brethren have gone
down

Before this youth, and so wilt thou, Sir
Star,

Art thou not old ?

Old, damsel, old and hard,
Old, with the might and breath of twenty
boys '

Said Gareth, 'Old, and over-bold in
brag '

But that same strength which threw the
Morning Star

Can throw the Evening '

Then that other blew
A hard and deadly note upon the horn
'Approach and arm me !' With slow
steps from out

An old storm beaten, russet, many stained
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,
And arm'd him in old arms, and brought
a helm

With but a drying evergreen for crest,
And gave a shield whereon the Star of
Even

Half tarnish'd and half bright, his emblem, shone

But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle bow,
They madly hurl'd together on the bridge,
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,
There met him drawn, and overthrew him
again,

But up like fire he started and was oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his
knees,

So many a time he vaulted up again,
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great
heart,

Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,
Labour'd within him, for he seem'd as one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry,
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not
put us down'

He half despairs, so Gareth seem'd to
strike

Vainly, the damsel clamouring all the
while,

'Well done, knave knight, well stricken,
O good knight knave—

O knave, as noble as any of all the
knights—

Shame me not, shame me not I have
promised—

Strike, thou art worthy of the Table
Round—

His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd
skin—

Strike—strike—the wind will never
change again'

And Gareth hearing ever stronger smote,
And hew'd great pieces of his armour off
him,

But lash'd in vain against the harden'd
skin,

And could not wholly bring him under,
more

Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge
on ridge,

The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and
springs

For ever, till at length Sir Gareth's brand
Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the
hilt

'I have thee now,' but forth that other
sprang,

And, all unknighlike, witted his way
arms

Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost
Crest, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the
bridge

Down to the river, sink or swim, and
cried,

'Lend, and I follow'

But the damsel said,
'I lead no longer, ride thou at my side
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-
knaves

"O trefail, sprinkling on the runy
plum,

O rainbow with three colours after rain,
Shine sweetly thence my love hath smiled
on me"

'Sir,—and, good faith, I fain had
added—Knight,

But that I heard thee call thyself a
knave,—

Shamed me I that I so rebuked, reviled,
Missaid thee, noble I am, and thought
the King

Sco'n'd me and mine, and now thy
pardon, friend,

For thou hast ever answer'd courteously,
And wholly bold thou art, and meek
withal

As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave,
Hast mazed my wit I marvel what thou
art

'Damsel,' he said, 'you be not all to
blame,

Saying that you mistrusted our good King
Would handle scorn, or yield you, ruling,
one

Not fit to cope your quest You said
your say,

Mine answer was my deed Good sooth'
— I hold

He scarce is knight, yea but half-man,
 nor meet
 To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets
 His heart be stir'd with any foolish heat
 At any gentle damsel's waywardness
 Shamed? care not 'thy foul sayings
 fought for me
 And seeing now thy words are fair,
 methinks
 There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his
 great self,
 Hath force to quell me'

Nigh upon that hour
 When the lone hermit forgets his melancholy,
 Lets down his other leg, and stretching,
 dreams
 Of goodly supper in the distant pool,
 Then turn'd the noble damsel smiling at
 him,
 And told him of a cavern hard at hand,
 Where bread and baken meats and good
 red wine
 Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors
 Had sent her coming champion, waited
 him

Anon they past a narrow comb wherein
 Were slabs of rock with figures, knights
 on horse
 Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning
 hues
 'Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once
 was here,
 Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the
 rock
 The war of Time against the soul of man
 And yon four fools have suck'd their alle-
 gory
 From these damp walls, and taken but
 the form
 Know ye not these?' and Gareth lookt
 and read—
 In letters like to those the vexillary
 Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming
 Gelt—
 'PHOSPHORUS,' then 'MLRIDILS'—
 'HESPERUS'—
 'NOX'—'MORS,' beneath five figures,
 armed men,

III

Slab after slab, their faces forward all,
 And running down the Soul, a Shape that
 fled
 With broken wings, torn raiment and
 loose hair,
 For help and shelter to the hermit's cave
 'Follow the faces, and we find it Look,
 Who comes behind?'

For one—delay'd at first
 Thio' helping back the dislocated Kay
 To Camelot, then by what thereafter
 chanced,
 The damsel's headlong error thro' the
 wood—
 Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-
 loops—
 His blue shield lions cover'd—sofly diew
 Behind the twain, and when he saw the
 star
 Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him,
 cried,
 'Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my
 friend'
 And Gareth cying pick'd against the cry,
 But when they closed—in a moment—at
 one touch
 Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the
 world—
 Went sliding down so easily, and fell,
 That when he found the grass within his
 hands
 He laugh'd, the laughter pour'd upon
 Lynette
 Harshly she ask'd him, 'Shamed and
 overthrown,
 And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,
 Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast
 in vain?'
 'Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son
 Of old King Lot and good Queen Belh
 cent,
 And victor of the bridges and the ford,
 And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by
 whom
 I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness—
 Device and sorcery and unhappiness—
 Out, sword, we are thrown!' And
 Lancelot answer'd, 'Prince,
 O Gareth—thro' the mere unhappiness

I,

Of one who came to help thee, not to
harm,
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee
whole,
As on the day when Arthur knighted him '

Then Gareth, 'Thou—Lancelot '—
thine the hand
That threw me? An some chance to mu
the boust
Thy brethren of thee make—which could
not chance—
Had sent thee down before a lesser speu,
Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot
—thou ' '

Whereat the maiden, petulant, 'Lance
lot,
Why came ye not, when call'd? and
wherefore now
Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my
knave,
Who being still rebuked, would answer
still
Courteous as any knight—but now, if
knight,
The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd
and trick'd,
And only wondering wherefore play'd
upon
And doubtful whether I and mine be
scoun'd
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's
hall,
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave,
prince and fool,
I hate thee and for ever '

And Lancelot said,
'Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth ' knight
art thou
To the King's best wish O damsel, be
you wise
To call him shamed, who is but over-
thrown?
Thrown have I been, not once, but many
a time
Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last,
And overthrower from being overthrown
With sword we have not striven, and
thy good horse

And thou art weary, yet not less I flit
Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance
of thine
Well hast thou done, for all the stream
is freed,
And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his
foe,
And when reviled, hast answer'd grac-
iously,
And makest merry when overthrown
Prince, Knight,
Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our
Table Round ' '

And then when turning to Lynette he
told
The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said,
'Ay well—ay well—for worse than being
fool'd
Of others, is to fool one's self A cave,
Sir Lancelot, is hid by, with meats and
drinks
And forage for the horse, and flint for fire
But all about it flies a honeysuckle
Seek, till we find And when they
sought and found,
Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
Past into sleep, on whom the maiden
gazed
'Sound sleep be thine ' sound cause to
sleep hast thou
Wake lusty ' Seem I not as tender to
him
As any mother? Ay, but such a one
As all day long hath rated at her child,
And vext his day, but blesses him asleep—
Good lord, how sweetly smells the
honeysuckle
In the hush'd night, as if the world were
one
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness '
O Lancelot, Lancelot '—and she clasp'd
her hands—
'Full merry am I to find my goodly knave
Is knight and noble See now, sworn
have I,
Else yon black felon had not let me pass,
I to bring thee back to do the battle with
him
Thus in thou goest, he will fight thee first,

Who doubts thee victor? so will my
knight knave
Miss the full flower of this accomplish-
ment'

Said Lancelot, 'Peradventure he, you
name,
May know my shield Let Gareth, an
he will,
Change his for mine, and take my charger,
flesh,
Not to be spun'd, loving the battle as
well
As he that rides him' 'Lancelot-like,'
she said,
'Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in
all'

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutch'd
the shield,
'Rampelance-splintering lions, on whom
all spears
Are rotten sticks! ye seem apter to rot!
Yea, ramp and rot at leaving of your
lord!—
Cue not, good beasts, so well I cue for
you
O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these
Streams virtue—fire—thio' one that will
not shame
Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield
Hence let us go'

Silent the silent field
They traversed Arthur's hup tho'
summer wan,
In counter motion to the clouds, allured
The glance of Gareth dicaming on his
liege
A star shot 'Lo,' said Gareth, 'the foe
falls!'

An owl whoopt 'Hark the victor peal
ing there!'
Suddenly she that rode upon his left
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent
him, crying,
'Yield, yield him this again 'tis he must
fight
I curse the tongue that all thio' yesterday
Reveled thee, and hath wrought on
Lancelot now

To lend thee horse and shield wonders
ye have done,
Miracles ye cannot here is glory enow
In having flung the three I see thee
maim'd,
Mangled I swear thou canst not fling
the fourth'

'And wherefore, damsel? tell me all
ye know
You cannot scare me, nor rough face, or
voice,
Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery
Appal me from the quest'

'Nay, Pincee,' she cried,
'God wot, I never look'd upon the face,
Seeing he never rides abroad by day,
But watch'd him have I like a phantom
pass
Chilling the night nor have I heard the
voice

Always he made his mouthpiece of a page
Who came and went, and still reported
him
As closing in himself the strength of ten,
And when his anger ture him, massacring
Man, woman, lad and girl—yea, the soft
baby'

Some hold that he hath swallow'd infant
flesh
Monster! O Pincee, I went for Lancelot
first,
The quest is Lancelot's gave him back
the shield'

Said Gareth laughing, 'An he fight for
this,
Blike he wins it as the better man
Thus—and not else!'

But Lancelot on him urged
All the devisings of their chivalry
When one might meet a mightier than
himself
How best to manage horse, lance, sword
and shield,
And so fill up the gap where force might
fail
With skill and fineness Instant were
his words

Then Gareth, 'Here be rules I know
but one—
To dash against mine enemy and to win
Yet have I watch'd thee victor in the
joust,
And seen thy way ' 'Heaven help thee,'
sigh'd Lynette

Then for a space, and under cloud that
grew
To thunder gloom palling all stars, they
rode
In converse till she made her palfrey halt,
Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd,
'There'
And all the three were silent seeing,
pitch'd
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak
Sunder the glooming crimson on the
marge,
Black, with black banner, and a long
black horn
Beside it hanging, which Sir Gareth
graspt,
And so, before the two could hinder him,
Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the
horn
Echo'd the walls, a light twinkled, anon
Came lights and lights, and once again
he blew,
Whereon were hollow trampings up and
down
And muffled voices heard, and shadows
past,
Till high above him, circled with her
maids,
The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him
White hands, and courtesy, but when
the Prince
Three times had blown—after long hush
—at last—
The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,
Thro' those black foldings, that which
housed therein
High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack
arms,
With white breast-bone, and baren ribs
of Death,

And crown'd with fleshless laughter—
some ten steps—
In the half light—thro' the dim dawn—
advanced
The monster, and then paused, and spake
no word

But Gareth spake and all indignantly,
'Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength
of ten,
Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God
hath given,
But must, to make the terror of thee more,
Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries
Of that which Life hath done with, and
the clod,
Less dull than thou, will hide with
mantling flowers
As if for pity?' But he spake no word,
Which set the horror higher a maiden
swoon'd,
The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and
wept,
As doom'd to be the bride of Night and
Death,
Sir Gareth's head pickled beneath his
helm,
And even Sir Lancelot thro' his wound
blood felt
Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were
aghast

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely
neigh'd,
And Death's dark war horse bounded
forward with him
Then those that did not blink the terror,
saw
That Death was cast to ground, and
slowly rose
But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the
skull
Half fell to right and half to left and lay
Then with a stronger buffet he clove the
helm
As throughly as the skull, and out from
this
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
Fresh as a flower new born, and crying,
'Knight,

Slay me not my three biethren bad me
do it,

To make a horror all about the house,
And stay the world from Lady Lyonois
They never dream'd the passes would be
past'

Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one
Not many a moon his younger, 'My fair
child,

What madness made thee challenge the
chief knight

Of Arthur's hall?' 'Fair Sir, they bad
me do it

They hate the King, and Lancelot, the
King's friend,

They hoped to slay him somewhere on
the stream,

They never dream'd the passes could be
past'

Then sprang the happier day from
underground,

And Lady Lyonois and her house, with
dance

And revel and song, made merry over
Death,

As being after all their foolish fears
And horrors only proven a blooming boy
So large mirth lived and Gareth won the
quest

And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonois,
But he, that told it later, says Lynette

GERAINT AND ENID

I

THE brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's
court,

A tributary pince of Devon, one
Of that great Order of the Table Round,
Had married Enid, Yniol's only child,
And loved her, as he loved the light of
Heaven

And as the light of Heaven varies, now
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night
With moon and trembling stars, so loved
Geraint

To make her beauty vary day by day

In crimsons and in purples and in gems
And Enid, but to please her husband's

eye,
Who first had found and loved her in a
state

Of broken fortunes, daily fionted him
In some fresh splendour, and the Queen
herself,

Grateful to Prince Geraint for service
done,

Loved her, and often with her own white
hands

Array'd and deck'd her, as the loveliest,
Next after her own self, in all the court
And Enid loved the Queen, and with true
heart

Adored her, as the stateliest and the best
And loveliest of all women upon earth
And seeing them so tender and so close,
Long in their common love rejoiced
Geraint

But when a rumour rose about the Queen,
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,
Tho' yet there lived no proof, nor yet
was heard

The world's loud whisper breaking into
storm,

Not less Geraint believed it, and there fell
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,
Tho' that great tenderness for Guinevere,
Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint
In nature wherefore going to the King,
He made this pretext, that his pinedom
lay

Close on the borders of a territory,
Wherein were bandit eais, and caulf
knights,

Assassins, and all flyers from the hand
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law
And therefore, till the King himself
should please

To cleanse this common sewer of all his
realm,

He craved a fair permission to depart,
And there defend his marches, and the
King

Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,
Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,
And fifty knights rode with them, to the
shores

Of Severn, and they past to their own
land,

Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,
He compass'd her with sweet observances
And worship, never leaving her, and grew
Forgetful of his promise to the King,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his principdom and its cares
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her
And by and by the people, when they met
In twos and threes, of fuller companies,
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him
As of a prince whose manhood was all
gone,

And molten down in mere uxoriousness
And thus she gather'd from the people's
eyes

This too the women who attend her heard,
To please her, dwelling on his boundless
love,

Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the
more

And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,
But could not out of bashful delicacy,
While he that watch'd her sadden, was
the more

Suspicious that her nature had turned

At last, it chanced that on a summer
morn

(They sleeping each by either) the new sun
Beat thro' the blindless casement of the
room,

And heated the strong warrior in his
dreams,

Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
And bared the knotted column of his
throat,

The massive square of his heroic breast,
And aims on which the standing muscle
sloped,

As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,
Admiring him, and thought within herself,
Was ever man so grandly made as he?

Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk

And accusation of uxoriousness
Across her mind, and bowing over him,
Low to her own heart piteously she said

'O noble heart and all puissant arms,
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is
gone?

I am the cause, because I dare not speak
And tell him what I think and what they
say

And yet I hate that he should linger here,
I cannot love my lord and not his name
For he has had I gird his harness on him,
And ride with him to battle and stand by,
And watch his mighty hand striking
great blows

At castles and at wrongers of the world
For better woe I find in the dark earth,
Not hearing any more his noble voice,
Not to be folded more in these dear arms,
And darken'd from the high light in his
eyes,

Than that my lord thro' me should suffer
shame

Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,
And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,
Or maybe pierced to death before mine
eyes,

And yet not dare to tell him what I think,
And how men shun him, saying all his force
Is melted into mere effeminacy?

O me, I fear that I am no true wife'

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,
And the strong passion in her made her
weep

True tears upon his broad and naked
breast,

And these awoke him, and by great mis-
chance

He heard but fragments of her later words,
And that she fear'd she was not a true wife
And then he thought, 'In pity of all my
care,

For all my pains, poor man, for all my
pains,

She is not faithful to me, and I see her
Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's
hall'

Then tho' he loved and revered her
too much

To dream she could be guilty of foul act,
Right tho' his manful breast danted the
pang

That makes a man, in the sweet face of her
Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable
At this he huld his huge limbs out of
bed,

And shook his drowsy squire awake and
cried,

'My charger and her palfrey,' then to her,
'I will ride forth into the wilderness,
For tho' it seems my spurs are yet to win,
I have not fall'n so low as some would
wish

And thou, put on thy worst and meanest
dress

And ride with me' And Enid ask'd,
amazed,

'If Enid eirs, let Enid leun her fault'
But he, 'I charge thee, ask not, but obey'
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
A faded mantle and a faded veil,
And moving toward a cedar cabinet,
Wherein she kept them folded reverently
With sprigs of summer laid between the
folds,

She took them, and array'd herself therein,
Remembering when first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her
in it,

And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey to her, as himself
Hav' told her, and then coming to the
court

" For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,
Before him came a forester of Dearn,
Wet from the woods, with notice of a brut
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,
First seen that day these things he told
the King

Then the good King gave order to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn
And when the Queen petition'd for his
leave

To see the hunt, allow'd it easily

So with the morning all the court were
gone

But Guinevere lay late into the morn,
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her
love

For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt,
But rose at last, a single maiden with her,
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd
the wood,

There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd
Waiting to hear the hounds, but heard
instead

A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince
Geraint,

Late also, wearing neither hunting dress
Nor weapon, save a golden hilted brand,
Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow
ford

Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll
A purple scarf, at either end whereof

There swung an apple of the purest gold,
Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up
To join them, glancing like a dragon fly
In summer suit and silks of holiday

Low bow'd the tributary Prince, and she,
Sweetly and stately, and with all grace
Of womanhood and queenhood, answer'd
him

'Late, late, Sir Prince,' she said, 'late
than we!'

'Yes, noble Queen, he answer'd, 'and
so late

That I but come like you to see the
hunt,

Not join it' 'Therefore wait with me,'
she said,

'For on this little knoll, if anywhere,
There is good chance that we shall hear
the hounds

Here often they break covert at our feet'

And while they listen'd for the distant
hunt,

And chiefly for the baying of Carrll,
King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth,
there rode

Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf,
Whereof the dwarf lagged latest, and the
knight

Had vizon up, and show'd a youthful face,

Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
In the King's hall, desu'd his name, and sent

Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf,
Who being vicious, old and irritable,
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,
Made answer sharply that she should not know

'Then will I ask it of himself,' she said
'Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not,' cried
the dwarf,

'Thou art not worthy ev'n to speak of him,'

And when she put her horse toward the knight,

Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd

Indignant to the Queen, whereat Geraint
Exclaiming, 'Surely I will learn the name,'
Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask'd it of him,

Who answer'd as before, and when the Prince

Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,

Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.

The Prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,
Dyeing it, and his quick, instinctive hand
Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him
But he, from his exceeding manfulness
And pure nobility of temperament,
Wroth to be wroth at such a worm,
refrain'd

From ev'n a word, and so returning said

'I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,
Done in your maiden's person to yourself
And I will track this vermin to their
earth's

For tho' I ride unarm'd, I do not doubt
To find, at some place I shall come at,
arms

On loan, or else for pledge, and, being
found,

Then will I fight him, and will break his
pride,

And on the third day will again be here,
So that I be not fall'n in fight Farewell'

'Farewell, fair Prince,' answer'd 'the
stately Queen

'Be prosperous in this journey, as in all,
And may you light on all things that you
love,

And live to wed with her whom first you
love

But ere you wed with any, bring your
bride,

And I, were she the daughter of a
king,

Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the
hedge,

Will clothe her for her bridal's like the
sun'

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that
he heard

The noble hart at bay, now the far hoin,
A little vex'd at losing of the hunt,
A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, thro' many a grassy
glade

And valley, with first eye following the
three

At last they issued from the world of
wood,

And climb'd upon a fur and even ridge,
And show'd themselves agunst the sky,
and sank

And thither came Geraint, and under
north

Beheld the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side whereof,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress
rose,

And on one side a castle in decay,
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry
rivine

And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed
Bawling, or like a clamour of the rocks
At distance, ere they settle for the night

And onward to the fortress rode the
three,

And enter'd, and were lost behind the
walls

'So,' thought Geraint, 'I have track'd
him to his earth'

And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot
hiss

And bustling whistle of the youth who
scour'd

His master's armour, and of such a one
He ask'd, 'What means the tumult in
the town?'

Who told him, scouring still, 'The
sparrow-hawk!'

Then riding close behind an ancient churl,
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Ask'd yet once more what meant the
hubbub here?

Who answer'd guiffly, 'Ugh! the sparrow-
hawk!'

Then riding further past an armourer's,
Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above
his work,

Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
He put the self same query, but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him,
said

'Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-
hawk

Has little time for idle questioners '
Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden
spleen

'A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-
hawk!'

Tits, wiens, and all wing'd nothings peck
him dead!

Ye think the rustic cackle of your boug
The murmur of the world! What is it
to me?

'O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-
hawks!'

Speak, if ye be not like the rest, hawk-
mad,

Where can I get me harbourage for the
night?

And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy?
Speak!'

Whereat the armourer turning all amazed
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
Came forward with the helmet yet in
hand

And answer'd, 'Pardon me, O stranger
knight,

We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,
And there is scanty time for half the work
Arms? truth! I know not all are
wanted here

Harbourage? truth, good truth, I know
not, save,

It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge
Yonder' He spoke and fell to work
again

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,
Across the bridge that spann'd the dry
ravine

There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl,
(His dress a suit of fiay'd magnificence,
Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and
sud

'Whither, fair son?' to whom Geraint
replied,

'O friend, I seek a harbourage for the
night'

Then Yniol, 'Enter therefore and partake
The slender entertainment of a house
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-
door'd'

'Thanks, venerable friend,' replied
Geraint,

'So that ye do not seive me sparrow-
hawks

For supper, I will enter, I will eat
With all the passion of a twelve hours'
fast'

Then sigh'd and smiled the hoary-headed
Earl,

And answer'd, 'Grieve cause than yours
is mine

To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-
hawk

But in, go in, for save yourself desire it,
We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest'

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
His charger trampling many a prickly
star

Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones,
He look'd and saw that all was ruinous
Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed
with fen,

And here had fall'n a great put of a
tower,
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the
cliff,
And like a crag was gray with wilding
flowers
And high above a piece of turret stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent,
wound
Baie to the sun, and monstrous ivy stems
Claspt the gray walls with hurry fibred
aims,
And suck'd the joining of the stones, and
look'd
A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove

And while he waited in the castle court,
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang
Clear thro' the open casement of the hall,
Singing, and as the sweet voice of a bird,
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
That sings so delicately clear, and make
Conjecture of the plumage and the form,
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Gerunt,
And made him hie a man abroad at morn
When first the liquid note beloved of men
Comes flying over many a windy wave
To Britain, and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with given
and red,
And he suspends his converse with a
friend,

Or it may be the labour of his hands,
To think or say, 'There is the mightingale,'
So fared it with Geraint, who thought
and said,

'Here, by God's grace, is the one voice
for me'

It chanced the song that Enid sang
was one
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid
sang

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and
lower the proud,
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine,
storm, and cloud,
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor
hate

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with
smile or frown,
With that wild wheel we go not up or
down,
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are
great

'Smile and we smile, the lords of many
lands,
Frown and we smile, the lords of our
own hands,
For man is man and master of his fate

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the stung
crowd,
Thy wheel and thou art shadows in the
cloud,
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor
hate'

'Hark, by the bud's song ye may learn
the nest,'
Said Yniol, 'enter quickly' Entering
then,

Right o'er a mount of newly fallen stones,
The dusky raster'd many cobweb'd hall,
He found an ancient dame in dim bio
cade,

And near her, like a blossom vermeil
white,

That lightly breaks a faded flower sheath,
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,
Her daughter In a moment thought
Gerunt,

'Here by God's good is the one maid for
me'

But none spake word except the honou
Earl

'Enid, the good knight's horse stands in
the court,

Take him to stall, and give him corn, and
then

Go to the town and buy us flesh and
wine,

And we will make us merry as we may
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are
great'

He spake the Prince, as Enid part
him, fain
To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught

His purple scarf, and held, and said,
 'Forbear!
 Rest! the good house, tho' ruin'd, O my
 son,
 Endures not that her guest should serve
 himself'
 And reveiencing the custom of the house
 Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbores

So Enid took his charger to the stall,
 And after went her way across the bridge,
 And reach'd the town, and while the
 Prince and Earl
 Yet spoke together, came again with one,
 A youth, that following with a costiel boie
 The means of goodly welcome, flesh and
 wine
 And Enid brought sweet cakes to make
 them cheer,
 And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread
 And then, because then hall must also
 serve
 For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread
 the board,
 And stood behind, and waited on the
 three
 And seeing hei so sweet and serviceable,
 Geraint had longing in him evermoire
 To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
 That crosst the trencher as she laid it
 down
 But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
 For now the wine made summer in his
 veins,
 Let his eye rove in following, or rest
 On Enid at hei lowly handmaid work,
 Now here, now there, about the dusky
 hall,
 Then suddenly address the hoary Earl

'Fair Host and Earl, I pray you
 courtesy,
 This sparrow-hawk, what is he? tell me
 of him
 His name? but no, good faith, I will not
 have it
 For if he be the knight whom late I saw
 Ride into that new fortress by your town,
 White from the mason's hand, then have
 I sworn

From his own lips to have it—I am
 Geraint
 Of Devon—for this morning when the
 Queen
 Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
 His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
 Stuck at hei with his whip, and she re-
 turn'd
 Indignant to the Queen, and then I swore
 That I would tack this cattiff to his hold,
 And fight and break his pride, and have
 it of him
 And all unarm'd I rode, and thought to
 find
 Arms in your town, where all the men
 are mad,
 They take the rustic murmur of their
 bourg
 For the great wave that echoes round the
 world,
 They would not hear me speak but if
 ye know
 Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
 Should have them, tell me, seeing I have
 sworn
 That I will break his pride and learn his
 name,
 Avenging this great insult done the
 Queen'

Then cried Earl Yniol, 'Art thou he
 indeed,
 Geraint, a name far sounded among men
 For noble deeds? and truly I, when first
 I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
 Felt ye were somewhat, yea, and by your
 state
 And presence might have guess'd you one
 of those
 That eat in Arthur's hall at Camelot
 Nor speak I now from foolish flattery,
 For this dear child hath often heard me
 praise
 Your feats of arms, and often when I
 paused
 Hath ask'd again, and ever loved to hear,
 So grateful is the noise of noble deeds
 To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong
 O never yet had woman such a pair
 Of suitors as this maiden, first Limours,

A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
 Drunk even when he woo'd, and be he dead
 I know not, but he past to the wild land
 The second was your foe, the sparrow hawk,
 My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name
 Slip from my lips if I can help it—he,
 When I that knew him fiece and turbulent
 Refused her to him, then his pride awoke,
 And since the proud man often is the mean,
 He sow'd a slander in the common ear,
 Affirming that his father left him gold,
 And in my chaige, which was not render'd to him,
 Bribed with large promises the men who served
 About my person, the more easily
 Because my means were somewhat broken into
 Thro' open doors and hospitality,
 Raised my own town against me in the night
 Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house,
 From mine own ealdom foully ousted me,
 Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
 For truly there are those who love me yet,
 And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
 Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,
 But that his pride too much despises me
 And I myself sometimes despise myself,
 For I have let men be, and have their way,
 Am much too gentle, have not used my power
 Nor know I whether I be very base
 Or very manful, whether very wise
 Or very foolish, only this I know,
 That whatsoever evil happen to me,
 I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,
 But can endure it all most patiently'

'Well said, true heart,' replied Geraint,
 'but arms,
 That if the sparrow hawk, this nephew,
 fight
 In next day's touney I may break his pride'
 And Yniol answer'd, 'Arms, indeed,
 but old
 And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
 Aie mine, and therefore at thine asking,
 thine
 But in this tournament can no man tilt,
 Except the lady he loves best be there
 Two forks are fyt into the meadow
 ground,
 And over these is placed a silver wand,
 And over that a golden sparrow hawk,
 The prize of beauty for the furest there
 And this, what knight soever be in field
 Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
 And tilts with my good nephew there
 upon,
 Who being apt at arms and big of bone
 Has ever won it for the lady with him,
 And toppling over all antagonism
 Has eain'd himself the name of sparrow
 hawk
 But thou, that hast no lady, canst not
 fight'

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright
 replied,
 I earning a little toward him, 'Thy leave'
 Let me lay lance in rest, O noble host,
 For this dear child, because I never saw,
 Tho' having seen all beauties of our time,
 Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair
 And if I fall her name will yet remain
 Untarnish'd as before, but if I live,
 So aid me Heaven when at mine utter
 most,
 As I will make her truly my true wife'

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart
 Danced in his bosom, seeing better days
 And looking round he saw not Enid there,
 (Who hearing her own name had stol'n
 away)
 But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
 And fondling all her hand in his he said,

'Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the
Prince'

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and
she
With frequent smile and nod departing
found,

Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl,
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek,
and then

On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart but never light and
shade

Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and
pale

Across the face of Enid hearing her,
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
When weight is added only grain by grain,
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle
breast,

Not did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it,
So moving without answer to her rest
She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw
The quiet night into her blood, but lay
Contemplating her own unworthiness,
And when the pale and bloodless east
began

To quicken to the sun, arose, and roused
Her mother too, and hand in hand they
moved

Down to the meadow where the jousts
were held,

And waited there for Yniol and Geraint

And thither came the twain, and when
Geraint

Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,
Himself beyond the rest pushing could
move

The chair of Idrys Yniol's rusted arms
Were on his princely person, but thro'
these

Piunculike his bearing shone, and errant
knights

And ladies came, and by and by the town
Flow'd in, and settling circled all the lists
And there they fixt the forks into the
ground,

And over these they placed the silver wand,
And over that the golden sparrow-hawk
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet
blown,

Spake to the lady with him and pro-
claim'd,

'Advance and take as fairest of the fair,
For I these two years past have won it
for thee,

The prize of beauty' Loudly spake the
Prince,

'Forbear there is a worthier,' and the
knight

With some surprise and thence as much
d disdain

Turn'd, and beheld the four, and all his
face

Glow'd like the heart of a great fire at
Yule,

So burnt he was with passion, crying out,
'Do battle for it then,' no more, and
thrice

They clash'd together, and thrice they
broke their spears

Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lash'd
at each

So often and with such blows, that all the
crowd

Wonder'd, and now and then from distant
walls

There came a clapping as of phantom
hands

So twice they fought, and twice they
breathed, and still

The dew of their great labour, and the
blood

Of their strong bodies, flowing, diann'd
their force

But either's force was match'd till Yniol's
cry,

'Remember that great insult done the
Queen,'

Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade
aloft,

And crack'd the helmet thro', and bit the
bone,
And fell'd him, and set foot upon his
bicast,
And said, 'Thy name?' To whom the
fallen man
Made answer, groaning, 'Edyin, son of
Nudd !'
Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee
My pride is broken men have seen my
fall !'
'Then, Edyin, son of Nudd,' replied
Geraint,
'These two things shalt thou do, or else
thou diest
First, thou thyself, with damsel and with
dwaif,
Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and coming
there,
Crave pardon for that insult done the
Queen,
And shalt abide her judgment on it, next,
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy
kin
These two things shalt thou do, or thou
shalt die !'
And Edyin answer'd, 'These things will
I do,
For I have never yet been overthrown,
And thou hast overthrown me, and my
pride
Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall !'
And rising up, he rode to Arthur's court,
And there the Queen forgave him easily
And being young, he changed and came
to lorthie
His crime of traitor, slowly drew himself
Bright from his old dark life, and fell at
last
In the great battle fighting for the King

But when the third day from the
hunting-morn
Made a low splendour in the world, and
wings
Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay
With her fair head in the dim yellow light,
Among the dancing shadows of the buds,
Woke and bethought her of her promise
given

No later than last eve to Prince Geraint—
So bent he seem'd on going the third day,
He would not leave her, till her promise
given—

To ride with him this morning to the
court,
And there be made known to the stately
Queen,

And there be wedded with all ceremony
At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
And thought it never yet had look'd so
mean

For as a leaf in mid November is
To what it was in mid October, seem'd
The dress that now she look'd on to the
dress

She look'd on to the coming of Geraint
And still she look'd, and still the terror
grew

Of that strange bright and dreadful thing,
a court,

All stung at her in her faded silk
And softly to her own sweet heart she said

'This noble prince who won our
earldom here,
So splendid in his acts and his attire,
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit
him !

Would he could tarry with us here awhile,
But being so beholden to the Prince,
It were but little grace in any of us,
Bent as he seem'd on going this third day,
To seek a second favour at his hands
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,
Myself would work eye dim, and finger
lame,
Far liefer than so much discredit him !'

And Enid fell in longing for a dress
All branch'd and flower'd with gold, a
costly gift

Of her good mother, given her on the
night

Before her birthday, thice six years ago,
That night of fine, when Edyin sack'd
their house,

And scatter'd all they had to all the winds
For while the mother show'd it, and the
two

Were turning and admiring it, the work
To both appear'd so costly, rose a cry
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they
fled

With little save the jewels they had on,
Which being sold and sold had bought
them bread

And Edyrn's men had caught them in
their flight,

And placed them in this ruin, and she
wish'd

The Prince had found her in her ancient
home,

Then let her fancy fit across the past,
And roam the goodly places that she
knew,

And last bethought her how she used to
watch,

Near that old home, a pool of golden carp,
And one was patch'd and blur'd and
lustreless

Among his burnish'd brethren of the pool,
And half asleep she made comparison
Of that and those to her own faded self
And the gay court, and fell asleep again,
And dreamt herself was such a faded form
Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool,
But this was in the garden of a king,
And tho' she lay dark in the pool, she
knew

That all was bright, that all about were
birds

Of sunny plumage in gilded turrets work,
That all the turf was rich in plots that
look'd

Each like a garnet or a turkis in it,
And lords and ladies of the high court
went

In silver tissue talking things of state,
And children of the King in cloth of
gold

Glanced at the doors or gambol'd down
the walks,

And while she thought 'They will not
see me,' came

A stately queen whose name was
Guinevere,

And all the children in their cloth of gold
Ran to her, crying, 'If we have fish at
all

Let them be gold, and charge the
gardeners now

To pick the faded creature from the pool,
And cast it on the miven that it die'

And therewithal one came and seized on
her,

And Enid started waking, with her heart
All overshadow'd by 'the foolish dream,
And lo! it was her mother grasping her
To get her well awake, and in her hand
A suit of bright apparel, which she laid
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly

'See here, my child, how fresh the
colours look,

How fast they hold like colours of a shell
That keeps the wear and polish of the
wave

Why not? It never yet was worn, I trow
Look on it, child, and tell me if ye know
it'

And Enid look'd, but all confused at
first,

Could scarce divide it from her foolish
dream

Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,
And answer'd, 'Yea, I know it, your
good gift,

So sadly lost on that unhappy night,
Your own good gift!' 'Yea, surely,' said
the dame,

'And gladly given again this happy morn
For when the jousts were ended yesterday,
Went Yniol thro' the town, and every
where

He found the sack and plunder of our
house

All scatter'd thro' the houses of the town,
And gave command that all which once
was ours

Should now be ours again and yester eve,
While ye were talking sweetly with you
Prince,

Came one with this and laid it in my hand,
For love or fear, or seeking favour of us,
Because we have our carldom back again
And yester eve I would not tell you of it,
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn
Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise?

For I myself unwillingly have worn
My faded suit, as you, my child, have
yours,

And howsoever patient, Yniol his
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,
And page, and maid, and squire, and
seneschal,

And pastime both of hawk and hound,
and all

That appertains to noble maintenance
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house,
But since our fortune swerved from sun to
shade,

And all thro' that young traitor, cruel need
Constrain'd us, but a better time has
come,

So clothe yourself in this, that better fits
Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride
For tho' ye won the prize of fairest fair,
And tho' I heard him call you fairest fair,
Let never maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old
And should some great court-lady say, the
Prince

Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the
hedge,

And like a madman brought her to the
court,

Then were ye shamed, and, worse, might
shame the Prince

To whom we are beholden, but I know,
When my dear child is set forth at her best,
That neither court nor country, tho' they
sought

Thro' all the provinces like those of old
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her
match'

Here ceased the kindly mother out of
breath,

And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay,
Then, as the white and glittering star of
morn

Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,
And left her maiden couch, and robed
herself,

Help'd by the mother's careful hand and
eye,

Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown,
Who, after, turn'd her daughter round,
and said,

She never yet had seen her half so fair,
And call'd her like that maiden in the tale,
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of
flowers,

And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,
Flu, for whose love the Roman Cæsar
fist

Invaded Britain, 'But we beat him back,
As this great Prince invaded us, and we,
Not beat him back, but welcomed him
with joy

And I can scarcely ride with you to court,
For old am I, and rough the ways and
wild,

But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream
I see my princess as I see her now,
Clothed with my gift, and gay among the
gay'

But while the women thus rejoiced,
Geraint

Woke where he slept in the high hall, and
call'd

For Enid, and when Yniol made report
Of that good mother making Enid gay
In such apparel as might well besem
His princess, or indeed the stately Queen,
He answer'd 'Erel, entreat her by my
love,

Albeit I give no reason but my wish,
That she ride with me in her faded silk'
Yniol with that hard message went, it fell
Like flaws in summer lying lusty corn
For Enid, all abash'd she knew not why,
Dared not to glance at her good mother's-
face,

But silently, in all obedience,
Her mother silent too, not helping her,
Laid from her limbs the costly brocaded
gift,

And robed them in her ancient suit again,
And so descended Never man rejoiced
More than Geraint to greet her thus
attired,

And glancing all at once as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,

But rested with hei sweet face satisfied,
Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,
Hei by both hands he caught, and sweetly
said,

O my new mothei, be not wroth or
grieved

At thy new son, for my petition to hei
When late I left Caerleon, our great
Queen,

In words whose echo lasts, they were so
sweet,

Made promise, that whatever bide I
brought,

Herself would clothe her like the sun in
Heaven

Thereafter, when I reach'd this rum'd hall,
Beholding one so bight in dark estate,

I vow'd that could I gun her, our fair
Queen,

No hand but hers, should make your End
burst

Sunlike from cloud—and likewise thought
perhaps,

That service done so graciously would
bind

The two together, fain I would the two
Should love each other how can End
find

A nobler friend? Another thought was
mine,

I came among you here so suddenly,
That tho' her gentle presence at the lists
Might well have served for proof that I
was loved,

I doubted whether daughter's tenderness,
Or easy nature, might not let itself

* Be moulded by your wishes for hei weal,
Or whether some false sense in hei own
self

Of my contrasting brightness, overbore
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall,
And such a sense might make her long
for court

And all its perilous glories and I
thought,

That could I someway prove such force
in hei

Link'd with such love for me, that at a
word

(No reason given her) she could cast aside
A splendour dear to women, new to her,
And therefore dearer, or if not so new,
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power
Of intermitted usage, then I felt

That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and
flows,

Fixt on hei faith Now, therefore, I do
rest,

A prophet certain of my prophecy,
That never shadow of mistruist can cross
Between us Grant me pardon for my

thoughts

And for my strange petition I will make
Amends hereafter by some grudy day,

When you fair child shall wear your
costly gift

Beside your own warm heath, with, on
her knees,

Who knows? another gift of the high
God,

Which, maybe, shall have learn'd to list
you thanks'

He spoke the mothei smiled, but half
in tears,

Then brought a mantle down and wrapt
her in it,

And claspt and kiss'd hei, and they rode
away

Now thence that morning Guinevere had
climb'd

The grant tower, from whose high crest,
they say,

Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,
And white sails flying on the yellow sea,

But not to goodly hill or yellow sea
Look'd the fair Queen, but up the vale

of Usk,

By the flat meadow, till she saw them
come,

And then descending met them at the
gates,

Embraced her with all welcome as a
friend,

And did hei honour as the Prince's bide,
And clothed hei for hei bridals like the

sun,
And all that week was old Caerleon gay,

For by the hands of Dubric, the high
saint,
They twain were wedded with all cere-
mony

And this was on the last year's Whit-
suntide

But Enid ever kept the faded silk,
Remembering how first he came on her,
Diest in that dress, and how he loved
her in it,

And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey toward her, as him
self

Had told her, and then coming to the
court

And now this morning when he said
to her,

'Put on your worst and meanest dress,'
she found

And took it, and array'd herself therein

II

O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true,
Heir, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and
reach

That other, where we see as we are seen'

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing
forth

That morning, when they both had got
to horse,

Perhaps because he loved her passionately,
And felt that tempest brooding round his
heart,

Which, if he spoke at all would break
perforce

Upon a head so dear in thunder, said
'Not at my side I charge thee ride
before,

Ever a good way on before, and thus
I charge thee, on thy duty as a wife,
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,
No, not a word!' and Enid was aghast,
And forth they rode, but scarce three
paces on,

When crying out, 'Effeminate as I am,
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,
All shall be none,' he loosed a mighty
purse,

Hung at his belt, and hurl'd it toward
the squire

So the last sight that Enid had of home
Was all the marble threshold flashing,
strown

With gold and scatter'd coinage, and the
squire

Chafing his shoulder then he cried again,
'To the wilds!' and Enid leading down
the tracks

Thro' which he had her lead him on,
they past

The marches, and by bandit haunted
holds,

Gray swamps and pools, waste places of
the fern,

And wildernesses, perilous paths, they
rode

Round was their pace at first, but slacken'd
soon

A stranger meeting them had surely
thought

They rode so slowly and they look'd so
pale,

That each had suffer'd some exceeding
wrong

For he was ever saying to himself,

'O I that wasted time to tend upon her,
To compass her with sweet observances,
To dress her beautifully and keep her
true'—

And there he broke the sentence in his
heart

Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue
May break it, when his passion masters
him

And she was ever praying the sweet
heavens

To save her dear lord whole from any
wound

And ever in her mind she cast about
For that unnoticed failing in herself,
Which made him look so cloudy and so
cold,

Till the great plover's human whistle
amazed

Her heart, and glancing round the waste
she fear'd

In every wav'ring brake an ambuscade
Then thought again, 'If there be such in
me,

I might amend it by the grace of Heaven,
If he would only speak and tell me of it'

But when the fourth part of the day
was gone,
Then Enid was aware of three tall knights
On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a
rock

In shadow, waiting for them, cariffs all,
And heard one crying to his fellow,
'Look,

Here comes a lagga'd hanging down his
head,

Who seems no bolder than a beaten
hound,

Come, we will slay him and will have his
horse

And armour, and his damsel shall be
ours'

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and
said

'I will go back a little to my lord,
And I will tell him all their cariff talk,
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,
Far liefer by his dear hand had I die,
I than that my lord should suffer loss or
shame'

Then she went back some paces of
return,

Met his full frown timidly firm, and said,
'My lord, I saw three bandits by the
rock

Waiting to fall on you, and heard them
boast

That they would slay you, and possess
your horse

And armour, and your damsel should be
theirs'

He made a wrathful answer 'Did I
wish

Your warning or your silence? one com-
mand

I had upon you, not to speak to me,

And thus ye keep it! Well then, look
—for now,

Whether ye wish me victory or defeat,
Long for my life, or hunger for my death,
Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost'

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,
And down upon him bare the bandit
three

And at the midmost charging, Prince
Geraint

Drove the long spear a cubit thro' his
breast

And out beyond, and then against his
blace

Of comrades, each of whom had broken
on him

A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,
Swung from his hand a windy buffet out

Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd
the twain

Or slew them, and dismounting like a man
That skins the wild beast after slaying
him,

Snapt from the three dead wolves of
woman's bane

The three gay suits of armour which they
wore,

And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits
Of armour on their horses, each on each,

And tied the bundle reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them
on

Before you,' and she drove them thro'
the waste

He follow'd never ruth began to
work

Against his anger in him, while he watch'd
The being he loved best in all the world,

With difficulty in mild obedience
Driving them on the fain had spoken to

her,
And loosed in words of sudden fire the
wrath

And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all
within,

But evermore it seem'd an easier thing
At once without remorse to strike her

dead,

Than to cry 'Halt,' and to her own
bright face
Accuse her of the least immodesty
And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth
the more
That she *could* speak whom his own ear
had heard
Call himself false and suffering thus he
made

Minutes an age but in scarce longer time
Than at Caerleon the full tided Usk,
Before he turn to fall seaward again,
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold
In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,
Before a gloom of stubborn shafted oaks,
Three other horsemen waiting, wholly
arm'd,

Whereof one seem'd far larger than her
lord,
And shook her pulses, crying, 'Look, a
prize'

Three horses and three goodly suits of
arms,
And all in charge of whom? again set on '
'Nay,' said the second, 'yonder comes a
knight'

The third, 'A craven, how he hangs his
head'

The giant answer'd meekly, 'Yea, but one?
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon
him'

And Enid ponder'd in her heart and
said,

'I will abide the coming of my lord,
And I will tell him all their villainy
My lord is weary with the fight before,
And they will fall upon him unawares
I needs must disobey him for his good,
How should I dare obey him to his harm?
Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me
for it,
I save a life dearer to me than mine'

And she abode his coming, and said to
him

With timid firmness, 'Have I leave to
speak?'

He said, 'Ye take it, speaking,' and she
spoke

'There lurk three villains yonder in the
wood,

And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one
Is larger limb'd than you are, and they say
That they will fall upon you while ye
pass'

To which he flung a wrathful answer
back

'And if there were an hundred in the
wood,

And every man were larger limb'd than I,
And all at once should sally out upon me,
I swear it would not ruffle me so much
As you that not obey me Stand aside,
And if I fall, cleave to the better man'

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,
Not dare to watch the combat, only
breathe

Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a
breath

And he, she decided most, brue down
upon him

Arm'd at the helm, his lance err'd, but
Geraint's,

A little in the late encounter strain'd,
Struck thro' the bulky brandit's corslet
home,

And then brake short, and down his
enemy roll'd,

And there lay still, as he that tells the
tale

Saw once a great piece of a promontory,
That had a sapling growing on it, slide
From the long shore cliff's windy walls
to the beach,

And there he still, and yet the sapling
grew

So lay the man transfixt His craven pair
Of comrades making slower at the
Prince,

When now they saw their bulwark fallen,
stood,

On whom the victor, to confound them
more,

Spun'd with his terrible war cry, for as
one,

That listens near a torrent mountain
brook,

All thro' the crash of the near cataract hears
The drumming thunder of the huge fall
At distance, were the soldiers wont to
hear

His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,
And foemen scared, like that false pair
who turn'd
Flying, but, overtaken, died the death
Themselves had wrought on many an
innocent

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd
the lance
That pleased him best, and slew from
those dead wolves
Then three gay suits of armour, each from
each,
And bound them on their horses, each on
each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on
Before you,' and she drove them thro' the
wood

He follow'd nearer still the pain she
had
To keep them in the wild ways of the
wood,
Two sets of three laden with jingling
arms,
Together, served a little to disedge
The sharpness of that pain about her
heart
And they themselves, like creatures gently
born
But into bad hands fall'n, and now so long
By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light
ears, and felt
Her low firm voice and tender government

So thro' the green gloom of the wood
they past,
And issuing under open heavens beheld
A little town with towers, upon a rock,
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike
chased
In the brown wild, and mowers mowing
in it

And down a rocky pathway from the place
There came a fair hand youth, that in
his hand

Bare victual for the mowers and Geraint
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale
Then, moving downwa'd to the meadow
ground,

He, when the fair hand youth came by
him, said,

'Friend, let her eat, the damsel is so
faint'

'Yea, willingly,' replied the youth, 'and
thou,

My lord, eat also, tho' the fare is coaise,
And only meet for mowers,' then set
down

His basket, and dismounting on the sward
They let the horses graze, and ate them
selves

And Enid took a little delicately,
Less having stomach for it than desire
To close with her lord's pleasure, but
Geraint

Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,
And when he found all empty, was
amazed,

And 'Boy,' said he, 'I have eaten all,
but take

A horse and arms for guerdon, choose
the best'

He, reddening in extremity of delight,

'My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold'

'Ye will be all the wealthier,' cried the
Prince

'I take it as free gift, then,' said the boy,
'Not guerdon, for myself can easily,
While your good damsel rests, return,
and fetch

Fresh victual for these mowers of our
Eail,

For these are his, and all the field is his,
And I myself am his, and I will tell
him

How great a man thou art he loves to
know

When men of mark are in his territory
And he will have thee to his palace here,
And serve thee costlier than with mowers'
fare'

Then said Geraint, 'I wish no better
fare

I never ate with angrier appetite

Than when I left your mowers dinnerless
And into no Earl's palace will I go
I know, God knows, too much of
palaces'

And if he want me, let him come to me
But hie us some fair chamber for the
night,
And stalling for the horses, and return
With victual for these men, and let us
know'

'Yea, my kind lord,' said the glad
youth, and went,
Held his head high, and thought himself
a knight,
And up the rocky pathway disappear'd,
Leading the horse, and they were left
alone

But when the Prince had brought his
eriant eyes
Home from the rock, sideways he let
them glance

At Enid, where she droopt his own
false doom,

That shadow of mistrust should never cross
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he
sigh'd,

Then with another humorous ruth re-
mark'd

The lusty mowers labouring dinnerless,
And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning
scythe,

And after nodded sleepily in the heat
But she, remembering her old ruin'd hall,
And all the windy clamour of the daws
About her hollow turret, pluck'd the
grass

There growing longest by the meadow's
edge,

And into many a listless annulet,
Now over, now beneath her marriage
ring,

Wove and unwove it, till the boy return'd
And told them of a chamber, and they
went,

Where, after saying to her, 'If ye will,
Call for the woman of the house,' to which
She answer'd, 'Thanks, my lord,' the
two remain'd

Apart by all the chamber's width, and
mute

As creatures voiceless thro' the fault of
buth,

Or two wild men supporters of a shield,
Painted, who stare at open space, nor
glance

The one at other, parted by the shield

On a sudden, many a voice along the
street,

And hecl against the pavement echoing,
bust

Then diowse, and either started while
the door,

Push'd from without, diave backward to
the wall,

And midstmost of a rout of roisterers,
Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,
Her suitor in old years before Geraint,
Enter'd, the wild lord of the place,
Limours

He moving up with pliant courtliness,
Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,
In the mid wumth of welcome and graspt
hand,

Found Enid with the corner of his eye,
And knew her sitting sad and solitary
Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly
cheer

To feed the sudden guest, and sump-
tuously

According to his fashion, had the host
Call in what men solver were his friends,
And feast with these in honour of their
Earl,

'And care not for the cost, the cost is
mine'

And wine and food were brought, and
Earl Limours

Drank till he jested with all ease, and told
Free tales, and took the word and play'd
upon it,

And made it of two colours, for his talk,
When wine and free companions kindled
him,

Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
Of fifty facets, thus he moved the Prince
To laughter and his comrades to applause

Then, when the Prince was merry, ask'd
Limous,

'Your leave, my lord, to cross the room,
and speak

To your good damsel there who sits apart,
And seems so lonely?' 'My free leave,'
he said,

'Get her to speak she doth not speak to
me'

Then rose Limous, and looking at his
feet,

Like him who tries the bridge he fears
may fail,

Crossed and came near, lifted adoring eyes,
Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisper-
ingly

'Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,
Enid, my early and my only love,
Enid, the loss of whom hath turn'd me
wild—

What chance is this? how is it I see you
here'

'Ye are in my power at last, are in my
power

Yet fear me not I call mine own self
wild,

But keep a touch of sweet civility
Here in the heart of waste and wilderness
I thought, but that your father came
between,

In former days you saw me favourably
And if it were so do not keep it back

Make me a little happier let me know it
'Owe you me nothing for a life half lost?

'Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you
are

And, Enid, you and he, I see with joy,
Ye sit apart, you do not speak to him,
You come with no attendance, page or
maid,

To serve you—doth he love you as of old?
For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know
Tho' men may bicker with the things they
love,

They would not make them laughable in
all eyes,

Not while they loved them, and you
wretched dress,

A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks

Your story, that this man loves you no
more

Your beauty is no beauty to him now
A common chance—right well I know it
—pall'd—

For I know men not will ye win him
back,

For the man's love once gone never
returns

But here is one who loves you as of old,
With more exceeding passion than of old

Good, speak the word my followers ring
him round

He sits unarm'd, I hold a finger up,
They understand nay, I do not mean
blood

Not need ye look so scared at what I say
My malice is no deeper than a mort,
No stronger than a wall there is the
keep,

He shall not cross us more, speak but
the word

O! speak it not, but then by Him that
made me

The one true lover whom you ever own'd,
I will make use of all the power I have
O pardon me! the madness of that hour,
When first I parted from thee, moves me
yet'

At this the tender sound of his own
voice

And sweet self pity, or the fancy of it,
Made his eye moist, but Enid hid his
eyes,

Moist as they were, wine heated from the
feast,

And answer'd with such craft as women
use,

Guiltless or guiltless, to stave off a chance
That breaks upon them perilously, and
said

'Eail, if you love me as in former
years,

And do not practise on me, come with
morn,

And snatch me from him as by violence,
Leave me to night I am weary to the
death'

Low at leave taking, with his brandish'd
plume
Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-
amorous Earl,
And the stout Prince bad him a loud
good night
He moving homeward babbled to his men,
How Enid never loved a man but him,
Nor cared a broken egg shell for her lord

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,
Debating his command of silence given,
And that she now perforce must violate it,
Held commune with herself, and while
she held

He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart
To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly
pleased

To find him yet unwounded after fight,
And hear him breathing low and equally
Anon she rose, and stepping lightly,
heav'd

The pieces of his armour in one place,
All to be there against a sudden need,
Then dozed awhile herself, but overtold
By that day's grief and travel, evermore
Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and
then

Went slipping down horrible precipices,
And strongly striking out her limbs
awoke,

Then thought she heard the wild Earl at
the door,

With all his rout of random followers,
Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning
her,

Which was the red cock shouting to the
light,

As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy
world,

And glimmer'd on his armour in the room
And once again she rose to look at it,
But touch'd it unawares jangling, the
casque

Fell, and he started up and stared at her
Then breaking his command of silence
given,

She told him all that Earl Limours had
said,

Except the passage that he loved her not,

Nor left untold the craft he self had used,
But ended with apology so sweet,
Low spoken, and of so few words, and
seem'd

So justified by that necessity,
That tho' he thought 'was it for him she
wept

In Devon?' he but gave a wrathful groan,
Saying, 'Your sweet faces make good
fellows fools

And traitors Call the host and bid him
bring

Charger and palfrey' So she glided out
Among the heavy breathings of the
house,

And like a household Spirit at the walls
Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and
return'd

Then tending her rough lord, tho' all
unask'd,

In silence, did him service as a squire,
Till issuing arm'd he found the host and
cried,

'Thy reckoning, friend?' and ere he
learnt it, 'Take

Five horses and their armours,' and the
host

Suddenly honest, answer'd in amaze,
'My lord, I scarce have spent the worth
of one'

'Ye will be all the wealthier,' said the
Prince,

And then to Enid, 'Forward' and to
day

I charge you, Enid, more especially,
What thing soever ye may hear, or see,
Or fancy (tho' I count it of small use
To charge you) that ye speak not but
obey'

And Enid answer'd, 'Yea, my lord,
I know

Your wish, and would obey, but riding
first,

I hear the violent threats you do not
hear,

I see the danger which you cannot see
Then not to give you warning, that seems
hard,

Almost beyond me yet I would obey'

'Yea so,' said he, 'do it be not too wise,
Seeing that ye are wedded to a man,
Not all mismated with a yawning clown,
But one with aims to guard his head and yours,
With eyes to find you out however far,
And ears to hear you even in his dreams'

With that he turn'd and look'd as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the deliver's toil,
And that within her, which a wanton fool,
Or hasty judge would have call'd her guilt,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall
And Geraint look'd and was not satisfied

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,
Led from the territory of false Limours
To the waste earldom of another earl,
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call'd the Bull,
Went Enid with her sullen follower on
Once she look'd back, and when she saw him ride
More near by many a rood than yesternoon,
It wellnigh made her cheerful, till Geraint
Waving an angry hand as who should say
'Ye watch me,' sadden'd all her heart again
But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,
The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof
Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw
Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it
Then not to disobey her lord's behest,
And yet to give him warning, for he rode
As if he heard not, moving back she held
Her finger up, and pointed to the dust
At which the warrior in his obstinacy,
Because she kept the letter of his word,
Was in a manner pleased, and turning, stood
And in the moment after, wild Limours,

Borne on a black horse, like a thunder cloud
Whose skirts are loosen'd by the breaking storm,
Half sudden off with by the thing he rode,
And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,
Dash'd on Geraint, who closed with him, and bore
Down by the length of lance and arm beyond
The crupper, and so left him stunn'd or dead,
And overthrew the next that follow'd him,
And blindly rush'd on all the rout behind
But at the flash and motion of the man
They vanish'd panic stricken, like a shoal
Of darting fish, that on a summer morn
Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot
Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,
But if a man who stands upon the brink
But lift a shining hand against the sun,
There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower,
So, scared but at the motion of the man,
Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,
And left him lying in the public way,
So vanish friendships only made in wine

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled Geraint,
Who saw the chugers of the two that fell
Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,
Mixt with the flyers 'Horse and man,' he said,
'All of one mind and all right honest friends'
Not a hoof left and I methinks till now
Was honest—paid with horses and with arms,
I cannot steal or plunder, nor nor beg
And so what say ye, shall we stir him there
Your lover? has your palfrey hurt enough
To bear his amour? shall we fist, or dine?
No?—then do thou, being right honest, pry
That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm,

I too would still be honest ' Thus he said

And sadly gazing on her bridle reins,
And answering not one word, she led the way

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,
But coming back he learns it, and the loss
So puns him that he sickens nigh to death,

So fared it with Geraint, who being pluck'd
In combat with the follower of Linnous,
Bled underneath his armour secretly,
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife
What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,
Till his eye drunken'd and his helmet wagg'd,

And at a sudden swerving of the road,
Tho' happily down on a bank of grass,
The Prince, without a word, from his horse fell

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his arms,

Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk
Had bried her forehead to the blistering sun,

And swithed the hurt that drun'd her dear lord's life

Then after all was done that hand could do,
She rested, and her desolation came
Upon her, and she wept beside the way

And many past, but none regarded her,
For in that realm of lawless turbulence,
A woman weeping for her murder'd mate
Wascared as much for as a summer shower
One took him for a victim of Earl Doorn,
Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him
Another hurrying past, a man at-arms,
Rode on a mission to the bandit Earl,
Half whistling and half singing a coarse song,

He drove the dust against her veilleseyes
Another, flying from the wrath of Doorn
Before an ever-fancied arrow, made

The long way smoke beneath him in his fear,

At which her palfrey whinnying lifted heel,

And scoud into the coppices and was lost,
While the great charger stood, grieved like a man

But at the point of noon the huge Earl Doorn,

Broad-faced with under-fringe of russet beard,

Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,
Came riding with a hundred lances up,
But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,
Cried out with a big voice, 'What, is he dead?'

'No, no, not dead!' she answered in all haste

'Would some of your kind people take him up,

And bear him hence out of this cruel sun?
Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead'

Then said Earl Doorn 'Well, if he be not dead,

Why wail ye for him thus? ye seem a child
And be he dead, I count you for a fool,
Your wailing will not quicken him—dead or not,

Ye men a comely face with red-hot tears
Yet, since the face is comely—some of you,
Here, take him up, and bear him to our hall

And if he live, we will have him of our hand,

And if he die, why earth has earth enough
To hide him—see ye take the charger too,
A noble one'

He spake, and past away,
But left two brawny spearmen, who advanced,

Each growling like a dog, when his good bone

Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,
Gnawing and growling so the ruffians growl'd,

Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,

Then chance of booty from the morning's
 iard,

Yet raised and laid him on a litter bier,
 Such as they brought upon their forays out
 For those that might be wounded, laid
 him on it

All in the hollow of his shield, and took
 And bore him to the naked hall of Doorn,
 (His gentle chauger following him unled)
 And cast him and the bier in which he
 lay

Down on an oaken settle in the hall,
 And then departed, hot in haste to join
 Their luckier mates, but growing as
 before,

And cursing their lost time, and the dead
 man,

And their own Earl, and their own souls,
 and her

They might as well have blest her she
 was deaf

To blessing or to cursing save from one

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,
 There in the naked hall, propping his
 head,

And chafing his pale hands, and calling
 to him

Till at the last he waken'd from his swoon,
 And found his own dear bride propping
 his head,

And chafing his faint hands, and calling
 to him,

And felt the warm tears falling on his face,
 And said to his own heart, 'She weeps
 for me'

And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as
 dead,

That he might prove her to the uttermost,
 And say to his own heart, 'She weeps
 for me'

But in the falling afternoon return'd
 The huge Earl Doorn with plunder to
 the hall

His lusty spearmen follow'd him with
 noise

Each hurling down a heap of things that
 rang

Against the pavement, cast his lance aside,

And doff'd his helm and then there
 flutter'd in,

Half bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,
 A tribe of women, dress'd in many hues,
 And mingled with the spearmen and
 Earl Doorn

Struck with a knife's haft laid against
 the board,

And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his
 spears

And men brought in whole hogs and
 quarter beeves,

And all the hall was dim with steam of
 flesh

And none spoke word, but all sat down
 at once,

And ate with tumult in the naked hall,
 Feeding like horses when you hear them
 feed,

Till Enid shrunk far back into herself,
 To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe
 But when Earl Doorn had eaten all he
 would,

He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and
 found

A damsel drooping in a corner of it
 When he remember'd her, and how she
 wept,

And out of her there came a power upon
 him,

And rising on the sudden he said, 'Eat'
 I never yet beheld a thing so vile
 God's curse, it makes me mad to see you
 weep

Eat! Look yourself Good luck had
 you good man,

For were I dead who is it would weep
 for me?

Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath
 Have I beheld a lady like yourself
 And so there lived some colour in your
 cheek,

There is not one among my gentlewomen
 Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove
 But listen to me, and by me be ruled,
 And I will do the thing I have not done,
 For ye shall share my earldom with me,
 gulf,

And we will live like two birds in one
 nest,

And I will fetch you forage from all
fields,
For I compel all creatures to my will'

He spoke the brawny spearman let
his cheek
Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and
turning stared,
While some, whose souls the old serpent
long had diawn
Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd
leaf

And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's
ear

What shall not be recorded—women they,
Women, or what had been those gracious
things,

But now desired the humbling of their
best,
Yea, would have help'd him to it and
all at once

They hated her, who took no thought of
them,

But answer'd in low voice, her meek head
yet

Drooping, 'I pray you of your courtesies,
He being as he is, to let me be'

She spake so low he hardly heard her
speech,

But like a mighty patron, satisfied
With what himself had done so graciously,

Assumed that she had thank'd him, adding, 'Yea,

Eat and be glad, for I account you mine'

She answer'd meekly, 'How should I
be glad

Henceforth in all the world at anything,
Until my lord arise and look upon me?'

Here the huge Eal cried out upon her
talk,

As all but empty heart and weariness
And sickly nothing, suddenly seized on
her,

And bare her by main violence to the
board,

And thrust the dish before her, crying,
'Eat'

'No, no,' said Enid, 'next, 'I will not
eat

Till yonder man upon the bier arise,
And eat with me' 'Drink, then,' he
answer'd 'Here'

(And fill'd a horn with wine and held it
to her,)

'Lo' I, myself, when flush'd with fight,
or hot,

God's curse, with anger—often I myself,
Before I well have drunken, sauce can
eat

Drink therefore and the wine will change
your will'

'Not so,' she cried, 'by Heaven, I
will not drink

Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,
And drink with me, and if he rise no
more,

I will not look at wine until I die'

At this he turn'd all red and paced his
hall,

Now gnaw'd his under, now his upper
lip,

And coming up close to her, said at last
'Girl, for I set ye scorn my courtesies,
Take warning yonder man is surely
dead,

And I compel all creatures to my will
Not eat nor drink? And wherefore wail
for one,

Who put your beauty to this flout and
scorn

By dressing it in rags? Amazed am I,
Beholding how ye butt against my wish,
That I forbear you thus cross me no
more

At least put off to please me this poor
gown,

This silken rag, this beggar-woman's
weed

I love that beauty should go beautifully
For see ye not my gentlewomen here,
How gay, how suited to the house of one
Who loves that beauty should go beauti-
fully?

Rise therefore, robe yourself in this
obey'

He spoke, and one among his gentle
women
Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,
Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue
Play'd into green, and thicker down the
front
With jewels than the sward with drops of
dew,
When all night long a cloud clings to the
hill,
And with the dawn ascending lets the day
Strike where it clung so thickly shone
the gems

But Enid answer'd, harder to be moved
Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
With life-long injuries burning unavenged,
And now their hour has come, and Enid
said

'In this poor gown my dear lord found
me first,
And loved me serving in my father's hall
In this poor gown I rode with him to
court,
And there the Queen array'd me like the
sun
In this poor gown he had me clothe
myself,
When now we rode upon this fatal quest
Of honour, where no honour can be
gain'd
And this poor gown I will not cast aside
Until himself arise a living man,
And bid me cast it I have griefs enough
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be
I never loved, can never love but him
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
'He being as he is, to let me be'

Then strode the brute Earl up and
down his hall,
And took his russet beard between his
teeth,
Last, coming up quite close, and in his
mood
Crying, 'I count it of no more avail,
Dame, to be gentle than ungentle with
you,
Fake my salute,' unknighly with flat hand,
However lightly, smote her on the cheek

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,
And since she thought, He had not
dared to do it,
Except he surely knew my lord was dead,
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,
Which sees the trapper coming thro' the
wood

This heard Geraint, and grasping at
his sword,
(It lay beside him in the hollow shield),
Made but a single bound, and with a
sweep of it
Shore thro' the swathy neck, and like a
ball
The russet bearded head roll'd on the
floor
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted
dead
And all the men and women in the hall
Rose when they saw the dead man rise,
and fled
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two
Were left alone together, and he said

'Enid, I have used you worse than
that dead man,
Done you more wrong we both have
undergone
That trouble which has left me thine
your own
Henceforward I will rather die than doubt
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, tho' mine own ears heard you
yesternight—
You thought me sleeping, but I heard
you say,
I heard you say, that you were no true
wife
I swear I will not ask your meaning in
it
I do believe yourself against yourself,
And will henceforward rather die than
doubt'

And Enid could not say one tender
word,
She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart
She only pray'd him, 'Fly, they will
return

And slay you, fly, your charger is with-
out,
My palfrey lost ' 'Then, Enid, shall you
ride
Behind me ' 'Yea, said Enid, 'let us go '
And moving out they found the stately
horse,
Who now no more a vassal to the thief,
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,
Neigh'd with all gladness as they came,
and stoop'd
With a low whinny toward the pair and
she
Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,
Glad also, then Geraint upon the horse
Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his
fool
She set her own and climb'd, he turn'd
his face
And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast
her arms
About him, and at once they rode away

And never yet, since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous
hour
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's
heart,
And felt him hers again she did not
weep,
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy
mist
Like that which kept the heart of Eden
green
Before the useful trouble of the rain
Yet not so misty were her meek blue
eyes
As not to see before them on the path,
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,
A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his
lance
In rest, and made as if to fall upon him
Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of
blood,
She, with her mind all full of what had
chanced,
Shriek'd to the stranger 'Slay not a dead
man ' '

'The voice of Enid,' said the knight,
but she,
Beholding it was Edyrin son of Nudd,
Was moved so much the more, and
shriek'd again,
'O cousin, slay not him who gave you
life '
And Edyrin moving frankly forward spake
'My lord Geraint, I greet you with all
love,
I took you for a bandit knight of Doom,
And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon
him,
Who love you, Prince, with something
of the love
Wherewith we love the Heaven that
chastens us
For once, when I was up so high in pride
That I was halfway down the slope to
Hell,
By overthrowing me you threw me higher
Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table
Round,
And since I know this Enid, when I my
self
Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,
I come the mouthpiece of our King to
Doom
(The King is close behind me) bidding
him
Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,
Submit, and hear the judgment of the
King '

'He hears the judgment of the King
of kings,'
Cried the wan Prince, 'and lo, the
powers of Doom
Are scatter'd,' and he pointed to the field,
Where, huddled here and there on mound
and knoll,
Were men and women staring and aghast
While some yet fled, and then he plainlier
told
How the huge Earl lay slain within his
hall
But when the knight besought him,
'Follow me,
Prince, to the camp, and in the King's
own ear

Speak what has chanced, ye surely have
endured

Strange chances here alone,' that other
flush'd,

And hung his head, and helted in reply,
Fearing the mild face of the blameless
King,

And after madness rcted question ask'd
Till Edyin crying, 'If ye will not go
To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,'
'Enough,' he said, 'I follow,' and they
went

But Enia in their going had two fears,
One from the bandit scatter'd in the field,
And one from Edyin Every now and
then,

When Edyin rein'd his charger at her side,
She shrank a little In a hollow land,
From which old fires have broken, men
may fear

Fresh fire and ruin He, perceiving, said

'Fare and dear cousin, you that most
had cause

To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed
Yourself were first the blameless cause to
make

My nature's piteous spark in the blood
Break into furious flame, being repulsed
By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and
wrought

Until I overtook him, then set up
(With one main purpose ever at my heart)
My haughty jousts, and took a paramour,
Did her mock honour as the fairest fun,
And, toppling over all antagonism,
So wax'd in pride, that I believed myself
Unconquerable, for I was wellnigh mad
And, but for my main purpose in these
jousts,

I should have slain you father, seized
yourself

I lived in hope that sometime you would
come

To these my lists with him whom best
you loved,

And there, poor cousin, with your meek
blue eyes,

The truest eyes that ever answer'd Heaven,
Behold me overturn and trample on him

Then, had you cried, or I felt, or pray'd
to me,

I should not less have kill'd him And
you came,—

But once you came,—and with your own
true eyes

Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one
Speaks of a service done him) overthrow
My proud self, and my purpose three
years old,

And set his foot upon me, and gave me
life

There was I broken down, there was I
saved

Tho' thence I rode all-shamed, hating
the life

He gave me, meaning to be rid of it
And all the penance the Queen laid upon
me

Was but to rest awhile within her court,
Where first as sullen as a beast new caged,
And waiting to be treated like a wolf,
Because I knew my deeds were known,
I found,

Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,
Such fine reserve and noble reticence,
Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace
Of tenderest courtesy, that I began
To glance behind me at my former life,
And find that it had been the wolf's in
deed

And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high
saint,

Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,
Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness,
Which, when it weds with manhood,
makes a man

And you were often there about the Queen,
But saw me not, or mark'd not if you saw,
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you,
But kept myself aloof till I was changed,
And fear not, cousin, I am changed
indeed'

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,
Like simple noble natures, credulous
Of what they long for, good in friend or
foe,

There most in those who most have done
them ill

And when they reach'd the camp the
 King himself
 Advanced to greet them, and beholding
 her
 Tho' pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a
 word,
 But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held
 In converse for a little, and return'd,
 And, gravely smiling, lifted her from
 horse,
 And kiss'd her with all pureness, brother
 like,
 And show'd an empty tent allotted her,
 And glancing for a minute, till he saw her
 Pass into it, turn'd to the Prince, and
 said

'Prince, when of late ye pray'd me for
 my leave
 To move to your own land, and there
 defend
 Your marches, I was prick'd with some
 reproof,
 As one that let foul wrong stagnate and
 be,
 By having look'd too much thro' alien
 eyes,
 And wrought too long with delegated
 hands,
 Not used mine own but now behold me
 come
 To cleanse this common sewer of all my
 realm,
 With Edyrn and with others have ye
 look'd
 At Edyrn? have ye seen how nobly
 changed?
 This work of his is great and wonderful
 His very face with change of heart is
 changed,
 The world will not believe a man repents
 And this wise world of ours is mainly
 right
 Full seldom doth a man repent, or use
 Both grace and will to pick the vicious
 quitch
 Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
 And make all clean, and plant himself
 afresh
 Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart

As I will weed this land before I go
 I, therefore, made him of our Table
 Round,
 Not rashly, but have proved him every
 way
 One of our noblest, our most valorous,
 Sincere and most obedient and indeed
 This work of Edyrn wrought upon himself
 After a life of violence, seems to me
 A thousand fold more great and wonderful
 Than if some knight of mine, risking his
 life,
 My subject with my subjects under him,
 Should make an onslaught single on a
 realm
 Of robbers, tho' he slew them one by one,
 And were himself nigh wounded to the
 death'

So spake the King, low bow'd the
 Prince, and felt
 His work was neither great nor wonderful,
 And past to Enid's tent, and thither came
 The King's own leech to look into his
 hurt,
 And Enid tended on him there, and there
 Her constant motion round him, and the
 breath
 Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,
 Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood
 With deeper and with ever deeper love,
 As the south west that blowing Bala lake
 Fills all the sacred Dec So past the days

But while Geraint lay healing of his
 hurt,
 The blameless King went forth and cast
 his eyes
 On each of all whom Uther left in charge
 Long since, to guard the justice of the
 King
 He look'd and found them wanting, and
 as now
 Men weed the white horse on the Berk
 shire hills
 To keep him bright and clean is hereto-
 fore,
 He rooted out the slothful officer
 Of guilty, which for bibe had wink'd at
 wrong,

And in their chauns set up a stronger race
With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men

To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,
And broke the bandit holds and cleansed
the land

Then, when Geiant was whole again,
they past
With Arthui to Caeleon upon Usk
There the great Queen once more embraced
her friend,
And clothed her in apparel like the day
And tho' Geiant could never take again
That comfort from their converse which
he took
Before the Queen's fair name was breathed
upon,
He rested well content that all was well
Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,
And fifty knights rode with them to the
shores

Of Severn, and they past to their own
land

And there he kept the justice of the King
So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts
Applauded, and the spiteful whisper died
And being ever foremost in the chase,
And victor at the tilt and tournament,
They call'd him the great Prince and man
of men

But Enid, whom the ladies loved to call
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
Enid the Good, and in their halls arose
The cry of children, Enids and Geiants
Of times to be, nor did he doubt her more,
But rested in her fealty, till he crown'd
A happy life with a fair death, and fell
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea
In battle, fighting for the blameless King

MERLIN AND VIVIEN.

A STORM was coming, but the winds
were still,

And in the wild woods of Biocelande,
Before an oak, so hollow, huge and old
It look'd a tower of ruin'd masonwork,
At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay

Whence came she? One that bare in
bitter grudge
The scorn of Arthui and his Table, Mark
The Cornish King, had heard a wandering
voice,

A minstrel of Caeleon by strong stoim
Blown into shelter at Tintagil, say
That out of naked knightlike purity
Sir Lancelot worshipt no unmarried girl
But the great Queen herself, fought in her
name,

Swore by her—vows like theirs, that high
in heaven
Love most, but neither marry, nor are
given

In marriage, angels of our Lord's report

He ceased, and then—for Vivien
sweetly said

(She sat beside the banquet nearest Mark),
'And is the fair example follow'd, Sir,
In Arthui's household?'—answer'd innocently

'Ay, by some few—ay, truly—youths
that hold

It more beseems the perfect virgin knight
To worship woman as true wife beyond
All hopes of gaining, than as maiden gill
They place their pride in Lancelot and
the Queen

So passionate for an utter purity
Beyond the limit of their bond, are these,
For Arthui bound them not to singleness
Bivae hearts and clean and yet—God
guide them—young'

Then Mark was half in heart to hurl
his cup
Straight at the speaker, but forbore—he
rose

To leave the hall, and, Vivien following
him,

Tunn'd to her 'Here are snakes within
the grass,

And you methinks, O Vivien, save ye fear
The monkish manhood, and the mask of
pure

Worn by this court, can stun them till they
stung'

And Vivien answer'd, smiling scorn-
fully,
'Why feul? because that foster'd at *thy*
court
I savour of thy—virtues? feul them? no
As Love, if Love be perfect, casts out
fear,
So Hate, if Hate be perfect, casts out
fear
My father died in battle against the King,
My mother on his corpse in open field,
She bore me there, for born from death
was I
Among the dead and sown upon the
wind—
And then on thee! and shown the truth
betimes,
That old true filth, and bottom of the well,
Where truth is hidden Grievous lessons
thine
And maxims of the mud! "This Arthur
pure!
Great Nature thro' the flesh herself hath
made
Gives him the lie! There is no being
pure,
My cherub, saith not Holy Writ the
same?"—
If I were Arthur, I would have thy blood
Thy blessing, stainless King! I bring
thee back,
When I have ferreted out thou burrow
ings,
The hearts of all this Order in mine
hand—
Ay—so that fate and craft and folly close,
Peirce, one coil of Arthur's golden
beard
To me this narrow guzzled folk of thine
Is clearer fashion'd—Well, I loved thee
first,
That waips the wit'

Loud laugh'd the graceless Mark
But Vivien, into Camelot stealing, lodged
Low in the city, and on a festal day
When Guenever was crossing the great
hall
Cast himself down, knelt to the Queen,
and wail'd

'Why kneel ye there? What evil have
ye wrought?
Rise!' and the damsel bidden rise arose
And stood with folded hands and down-
ward eyes
Of glancing corner, and all meekly said,
'None wrought, but suffer'd much, an
orphin maid!
My father died in battle for thy King,
My mother on his corpse—in open field,
The saddest sounding wails of Lyonesse—
Poor wretch—no friend!—and now by
Mark the King
For that small chain of fortune mine,
pursued—
If any such be mine—I fly to thee
Save, save me thou—Woman of women—
thine
The wrath of beauty, thine the crown of
power,
Be thine the balm of pity, O Heaven's
own white
Euth angel, stainless bride of stainless
King—
Help, for he follows! take me to thyself!
O yield me shelter for mine innocency
Among thy maidens!'

Hic her slow sweet eyes
Flew tremulous, but humbly hopeful, rose
Fast on her hero's, while the Queen
who stood
All glittering like May sunshine on May
leaves
In green and gold, and plumed with green
replied,
'Perce, child! of overpraise and over-
blame
We choose the last Our noble Arthur,
him
Ye scarce can overpraise, will here and
know
Nay—we believe all evil of thy Mark—
Well, we shall test thee faithful, but this
hour
We ride a hawking with Sir Lancelot
He hath given us a fur falcon which he
train'd,
We go to prove it Bide ye here the
while'

She past, and Vivien murmur'd after
 'Go!
 I bide the while' Then thro' the portal-
 arch
 Peering askance, and muttering broken
 wise,
 As one that labours with an evil dream,
 Beheld the Queen and Lancelot get to
 horse

'Is that the Lancelot?' goodly—ay, but
 grunt
 Courteous—amends for gruntness—takes
 her hand—
 That glance of theirs, but for the street,
 had been
 A clinging kiss—how hand lingers in
 hand!
 Let go at last!—they ride away—to hawk
 For waterfowl! Royaller game is mine
 For such a supersensual sensual bond
 As that gray cuckoo chapt of at our
 heart—
 Touch first with flame—glance will serve
 —the kiss!
 Ah little wit that bores in the dyke
 Thy hole by night to let the boundless
 deep
 Down upon full of cities while they
 dance—
 Or dream—of thee they dream'd not—
 not of me
 These—ay, but each of either side, and
 dream
 The mortal dream that never yet was
 mine—
 Ride, ride and dream until ye wake—to
 me!
 Then, narrow court and lubber King,
 farewell!
 For Lancelot will be gracious to the lat,
 And our wise Queen, if knowing that I
 know,
 Will hate, loathe, fear—but honour me
 the more'

Yet while they rode together down the
 plain,
 Then talk was all of training, terms of wit,
 Diet and seeing, jesses, lash and lure

'She is too noble' he said 'to check at
 pies,
 Nor will she rake there is no business
 in her'
 Here when the Queen demanded as by
 chance
 'Know ye the stranger woman?' 'Let
 her be,'
 Said Lancelot and unhooded casting off
 The goodly falcon free, she tower'd,
 her bells,
 Tone under tone, shrill'd, and they lifted
 up
 Their eager faces, wondering at the
 strength,
 Boldness and royal knight-hood of the bird
 Who pounced her quarry and slew it
 Many a time
 As once—of old—among the flowers—
 they rode

But Vivien half forgotten of the Queen
 Among her damscals brooding sat, heard,
 watch'd
 And whisper'd thro' the peaceful court
 she crept
 And whisper'd then as Arthur in the
 highest
 Leaven'd the world, so Vivien in the
 lowest,
 Arriving at a time of golden rest,
 And sowing one ill hum from ear to ear,
 While all the heathen lay at Arthur's feet,
 And no quest came, but all was joust and
 play,
 Leaven'd his hall They heard and let
 her be

Thereafter as an enemy that has left
 Death in the living waters, and with
 drawn,
 The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court

She hated all the knights, and heard in
 thought
 Their lavish comment when her name
 was named
 For once, when Arthur walking all alone,
 Vext at a rumour issued from himself
 Of some corruption crept among his
 knights,

Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fair,
 Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy
 mood
 With reverent eyes mock loyal, shaken
 voice,
 And flutter'd adoration, and at last
 With dark sweet hints of some who
 prized him more
 Than who should prize him most, at
 which the King
 Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by
 But one had watch'd, and had not held
 his peace
 It made the laughter of an afternoon
 That Vivien should attempt the blameless
 King
 And after that, she set herself to goun
 Him, the most famous man of all those
 times,
 Merlin, who knew the range of all then
 arts,
 Had built the King his havens, ships,
 and halls,
 Was also Bard, and knew the starry
 heavens,
 The people call'd him Wizard, whom at
 first
 She play'd about with slight and sprightly
 talk,
 And vivid smiles, and furtly venom'd
 points
 Of slander, glancing here and grazing
 there,
 And yielding to his kinder moods, the
 Seer
 Would watch her at her petulance, and
 play,
 Ev'n when they seem'd unloveable, and
 laugh
 As those that watch a kitten, thus he
 grew
 Tolerant of what he half disdain'd, and
 she,
 Perceiving that she was but half disdain'd,
 Began to break her sports with graver fits,
 Turn red or pale, would often when they
 met
 Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him
 With such a fixt devotion, that the old
 man,

Tho' doubtful, felt the flattery, and at
 times
 Would flatter his own wish in age for love,
 And half believe her true for thus at
 times
 He waver'd, but that other clung to him,
 Fixt in her will, and so the seasons went

Then fell on Merlin a great melancholy,
 He walk'd with dreams and darkness,
 and he found
 A doom that ever poised itself to fall,
 An ever moaning battle in the mist,
 World war of dying flesh against the life,
 Death in all life and lying in all love,
 The merriest having power upon the
 highest,
 And the high purpose broken by the
 worm

So leaving Arthur's court he gain'd the
 beach,
 There found a little boat, and stept into
 it,
 And Vivien follow'd, but he mark'd her
 not
 She took the helm and he the sul, the
 boat
 Drove with a sudden wind across the
 deeps,
 And touching Dieton sands, they dis-
 embark'd
 And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,
 Ev'n to the wild woods of Brocelande
 For Merlin once had told her of a charm,
 The which if any wrought on anyone
 With woven paces and with waving aims,
 The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie
 Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower,
 From which was no escape for evermore,
 And none could find that man for ever-
 more,
 Nor could he see but him who wrought
 the charm
 Coming and going, and he lay as dead
 And lost to life and use and name and
 fame
 And Vivien ever sought to work the
 charm
 Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,

As fancying that her glory would be great
According to his greatness whom she
quenched

There lay she all her length and kiss'd
his feet,
As if in deepest reverence and in love
A twist of gold was round her hair, a
robe
Of samite without price, that more exprest
Than hid her, clung about her lissome
limbs,
In colour like the sun-shining palm
On fallows in the windy gleams of March
And while she kiss'd them, crying,
'Tample me,
Dear feet, that I have follow'd thro' the
world,
And I will pray you worship, tread me
down
And I will kiss you for it,' he was mute
So dark a forethought roll'd about his
brain,
As on a dull day in an Ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long
sea hall
In silence wherefore, when she lifted up
A face of red apparel, and spake and said,
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and again,
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and once
more,
'Great Master, do ye love me?' he was
mute
And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
Writhed toward him, slid up his knee
and sat,
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
Together, curved an arm about his neck,
Clung like a snake, and letting her left
hand
Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
Made with her right a comb of pearl to
part
The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes then he spoke and said,
Not looking at her, 'Who are wise in love
Love most, say least,' and Vivien an-
swer'd quick,
'I saw the little elf god eyeless once
In Arthur's arias hall at Camelot

But neither eyes nor tongue—O stupid
child!

Yet you are wise who say it, let me think
Silence is wisdom I am silent then,
And ask no kiss,' then adding all at once,
'And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom,'
drew

The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard
Across her neck and bosom to her knee,
And call'd himself a gilded summer fly
Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web,
Who meant to eat her up in that wild
wood

Without one word So Vivien call'd
herself,

But rather seem'd a lovely baleful star
Veil'd in gray vapour, till he sadly
smiled

'To what request for what strange boon,'
he said,

'Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,
O Vivien, the preamble? yet my thanks,
For these have broken up my melancholy'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily,
'What, O my Master, have ye found
your voice?

I bid the stranger welcome Thanks at
last!

But yesterday you never open'd lip,
Except indeed to drink no cup had we
In mine own lady palms I call'd the
spring

That gather'd trickling dropwise from
the cleft,

And made a pretty cup of both my hands
And offer'd you it kneeling then you
drank

And knew no more, nor gave me one
poor word,

O no more thanks than might a goat have
given

With no more sign of reverence than a
beard

And when we halted at that other well,
And I was faint to swooning, and you lay
Foot gilt with all the blossom dust of
those

Deep meadows we had traversed, did
you know

That Vivien bathed your feet before her
own?

And yet no thanks and all thro' this
wild wood

And all this morning when I fondled you
Boon, ay, there was a boon, one not so
strange—

How had I wrong'd you? surely ye are
wise,

But such a silence is more wise than
kind'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers
and said

'O did ye never lie upon the shore,
And watch the curl'd white of the coming
wave

Glass'd in the slippery sand before it
breaks?

Ev'n such a wave, but not so pleasurable,
Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,
Had I for three days seen, ready to fall
And then I rose and fled from Arthur's
court

To break the mood You follow'd me
unask'd,

And when I look'd, and saw you follow-
ing still,

My mind involved yourself the nearest
thing

In that mind mist for shall I tell you
truth?

You seem'd that wave about to break upon
me

And sweep me from my hold upon the
world,

My use and name and fame You pardon
child

Your pretty spoils have bughten'd all
again

And ask you boon, for boon I owe you
thrice,

Once for wrong done you by confusion,
next

For thanks it seems till now neglected,
last

For these your dainty gambols wherefore
ask,

And take this boon so strange and not so
strange'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mourn-
fully

'O not so strange as my long asking it,
Not yet so strange as you yourself are
strange,

Nor half so strange as that dark mood of
yours

I ever fear'd ye were not wholly mine,
And see, yourself have own'd ye did me
wrong

The people call you prophet let it be
But not of those that can expound them
selves

Fake Vivien for expounder, she will call
That three days long presageful gloom of
yours

No presage, but the same mistrustful mood
That makes you seem less noble than
yourself,

Whenever I have ask'd this very boon,
Now ask'd again for see you not, dear
love,

That such a mood as that, which lately
gloom'd

Your fancy when ye saw me following
you,

Must make me fear still more you are not
mine,

Must make me yearn still more to prove
you mine,

And make me wish still more to learn
this charm

Of woven prices and of waving hands,
As proof of trust O Merlin, teach it me
The charm so taught will charm us both
to rest

For, grant me some slight power upon
your fate,

I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust,
Should rest and let you rest, knowing you
mine

And therefore be as great as ye are named,
Not muffled round with selfish reticence

How had you look and how demurely
O, if you think this wickedness in me

That I should prove it on you unwares,
That makes me passing wrathful, then

our bond

Had best be loosed for ever but think
or not,

By Heaven that hears I tell you the clean
truth,
As clean as blood of babes, as white as
milk

O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,
If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,
Ev'n in the jumbled rubbish of a dream,
Have tript on such conjectural treachery—
May this hard earth cleave to the Nether
hell

Down, down, and close again, and nip
me fast,

If I be such a traitress Yield my boon,
I'll which I scarce can yield you all I am,
And grant my re-iterated wish,
The great proof of your love because I
think,

However wise, ye hardly know me yet'

And Merlin loosed his hand from hers
and said,

'I never was less wise, however wise,
Too curious Vivien, tho' you till of trust,
Than when I told you first of such a
chum

Yea, if ye talk of trust I tell you this,
Too much I trusted when I told you that,
And stung this vice in you which stung
me

Thio' woman in the first hour, for howsoever
In children a great curiousness be well,
Who have to learn themselves and all the
world,

In you, that are no child, for still I find
Your face is practised when I spell the
lines,

I call it,—well, I will not call it vice
But since you name yourself the summer
fly,

I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat,
That settles, beaten back, and beaten back
Settles, till one could yield for weakness.
But since I will not yield to give you power
Upon my life and use and name and fame,
Why will ye never ask some other boon?
Yea, by God's good, I trusted you too much'

And Vivien, like the tenderest hearted
maiden
That ever bided tryst at village stile,

Made answer, either eyelid wet with tears
'Nay, Master, be not wrathful with your
maid,

Guess her let her feel herself forgiven
Who feels no heart to ask another boon
I think ye hardly know the tender rhyme
Of "trust me not at all or all in all"
I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,
And it shall answer for me Listen to it

"In Love, if Love be Love, if Love
be ours,
Faith and unfaith can never be equal
powers
Unfaith in right is want of faith in all

"It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all

"The little rift within the lover's lute
Or little pitted speck in guinea'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all

"It is not worth the keeping let it go
But shall it answer, darling, answer, no
And trust me not at all or all in all"

O Master, do ye love my tender rhyme?"

And Merlin look'd and half believed
her true,
So tender was her voice, so fair her face,
So sweetly gleam'd her eyes behind her
tears

Like sunlight on the plum behind a
shadow
And yet he answer'd half indignantly

'For other was the song that once I
heard

By this huge oak, sung nearly where we sit
For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,
To chase a creature that was current then
In these wild woods, the hut with golden
hoins

It was the time when first the question
rose

About the founding of a Table Round,
That was to be, for love of God and man
And noble deed, the flower of all the
world

And each incited each to noble deeds
 And while we waited, one, the youngest
 of us,
 We could not keep him silent, out he
 flash'd,
 And into such a song, such fire for fame,
 Such trumpet blowings in it, coming down
 To such a stein and non-clashing close,
 That when he stopt we long'd to hurl
 together,
 And should have done it, but the beau-
 teous beast
 Scared by the noise upstarted at our feet,
 And like a silver shadow slipt away
 Thro' the dim land, and all day long we
 rode
 Thio' the dim land against a rushing
 wind,
 That glorious roundel echoing in our
 ears,
 And chased the flashes of his golden horns
 Until they vanish'd by the fairy well
 That laughs at iron—as our warriors did—
 Where children cast their pins and nails,
 and cry,
 "Laugh, little well!" but touch it with
 a sword,
 It buzzes fiercely round the point, and
 there
 We lost him such a noble song was that
 But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet
 rhyme,
 I felt as tho' you knew this cursed charm,
 Were proving it on me, and that I lay
 And felt them slowly ebbing, name and
 fame'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mourn-
 fully
 'O mine have ebb'd away for evermore,
 And all tho' following you to this wild
 wood,
 Because I saw you sad, to comfort you
 Lo now, what hearts have men! they
 never mount
 As high as woman in her selfless mood
 And touching fame, howe'er ye scorn my
 song,
 Take one verse more—the lady speaks it
 —this

' "My name, once mine, now thine, is
 closerlei mine,
 For fame, could fame be mine, that fame
 were thine,
 And shame, could shame be thine, that
 shame were mine
 So trust me not at all or all in all "

' Says she not well? and there is more
 —this rhyme
 Is like the fair pearl necklace of the
 Queen,
 That burst in dancing, and the pearls
 were split,
 Some lost, some stolen, some as relics
 kept
 But nevermore the same two sister pearls
 Run down the silken thread to kiss each
 other
 On her white neck—so is it with this
 rhyme
 It lives dispersedly in many hands,
 And every minstrel sings it differently,
 Yet is there one true line, the pearl of
 pearls
 "Man dreams of Fame while woman
 wakes to love"
 Yea! Love, tho' Love were of the gross-
 est, craves
 A portion from the solid present, eats
 And uses, cradles of the rest, but Fame,
 The time that follows death is nothing
 to us,
 And what is Fame in life but half dis-
 fame,
 And counterchanged with darkness? ye
 yourself
 Know well that Envy calls you Devil's
 son,
 And since ye seem the Master of all Art,
 They fain would make you Master of all
 vice'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and
 said,
 'I once was looking for a magic weed,
 And found a fair young squire who sat
 alone,
 Had carved himself a knightly shield of
 wood,
 And then was painting on it fancied arms,

Azure, an Eagle using or, the Sun
 In dexter chief, the scroll "I follow
 fame"
 And speaking not, but leaning over him,
 I took his brush and blotted out the bird,
 And made a Gardener putting in a graft,
 With this for motto, "Rather use than
 fame"
 You should have seen him blush, but
 afterwards
 He made a stalwart knight O Vivien,
 For you, methinks you think you love me
 well,
 For me, I love you somewhat, rest and
 Love
 Should have some rest and pleasure in
 himself,
 Not ever be too curious for a boon,
 Too prudent for a proof against the grain
 Of him ye say ye love but Fame with
 men,
 Being but ampler means to serve man
 kind,
 Should have small rest or pleasure in
 himself,
 But work is vassal to the larger love,
 That dwarfs the petty love of one to one
 Use give me Fame at first, and Fame
 again
 Increasing give me use Lo, there my
 boon!
 What other? for men sought to prove me
 vile,
 Because I fain had given them greater
 wits
 And then did Envy call me Devil's son
 The sick weak beast seeking to help her-
 self
 By striking at her better, miss'd, and
 brought
 Her own claw back, and wounded her
 own heart
 Sweet were the days when I was all un-
 known,
 But when my name was lifted up, the
 storm
 Drake on the mountain and I cared not
 for it
 Right well know I that Fame is half
 disfame,

Yet needs must work my work That
 other fame,
 To one at least, who hath not children,
 vague,
 The cackle of the unborn about the grave,
 I cared not for it a single misty star,
 Which is the second in a line of stars
 That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,
 I never gazed upon it but I dreamt
 Of some vast charm concluded in that star
 To make fame nothing Wherefore, if I
 feru,
 Giving you power upon me thro' this
 charm,
 That you might play me falsely, having
 power,
 However well ye think ye love me now
 (As sons of kings loving in pupillage
 Have turn'd to tyrants when they came
 to power)
 I rather dread the loss of use than fame,
 If you—and not so much from wickedness,
 As some wild turn of anger, or a mood
 Of overstrain'd affection, it may be,
 To keep me all to your own self,—or else
 A sudden spurt of woman's jealousy,—
 Should try this chain on whom ye say ye
 love'

And Vivien answer'd smiling as in
 wraith
 'Have I not sworn? I am not trusted
 Good'
 Well, hide it, hide it, I shall find it out,
 And being found take heed of Vivien
 A woman and not trusted, doubtless I
 Might feel some sudden turn of anger born
 Of your misfaith, and your fine epithet
 Is accurate too, for this full love of mine
 Without the full heart back may merit well
 Your term of overstrain'd So used as I,
 My daily wonder is, I love at all
 And as to woman's jealousy, O why not?
 O to what end, except a jealous one,
 And one to make me jealous if I love,
 Was this fair charm invented by yourself?
 I well believe that all about this world
 Ye cage a buxom captive here and there,
 Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower
 From which is no escape for evermore'

Then the grete Master meynly answer'd
 hei
 'Full many a love in loving youth was
 mine,
 I needed then no charm to keep them mine
 But youth and love, and that full heart
 of yours
 Whereof ye prattle, may now assure you
 mine,
 So live uncharm'd For those who
 wrought it first,
 The wrist is pruted from the hand that
 wived,
 The feet unmoitised from their ankle-
 bones
 Who paced it, ages back but will ye heere
 The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme'

'There lived a king in the most Eastern
 East,
 Less old than I, yet older, for my blood
 Hath earnest in it of fair springs to be
 A tawny pirate anchor'd in his port,
 Whose bark had plunder'd twenty name-
 less isles,
 And passing one, at the high pcep of
 dawn,
 He saw two cities in a thousand borts
 All fighting for a woman on the sea
 And pushing his black craft among them
 all,
 He lightly scatter'd thews and brought
 hei off,
 With loss of half his people arrow-shun,
 A maid so smooth, so white, so wonderful,
 They said a light came from hei when she
 moved
 And since the pirate would not yield her
 up,
 The King impaled him for his piracy,
 Then made her Queen but those idle
 nurtured eyes
 Waged such unwilling tho' successful war
 On all the youth, they sickn'd, counsels
 thinn'd,
 And armies waned, for magnet like she
 drew
 The rustiest iron of old fighters' heuts,
 And beasts themselves would worship,
 camels knelt

Unbidden, and the brutes of mountain
 back
 That carry kings in castles, bow'd black
 knees
 Of homage, ringing with their serpent
 hands,
 To make hei smile, hei golden ankle-bells
 What wonder, being jealous, that he sent
 His horns of proclamation out thro' all
 The hundred under-kingdoms that he
 swy'd
 To find a wizard who might teach the King
 Some charm, which being wrought upon
 the Queen
 Might keep hei all his own to such a one
 He promised more than ever king has
 given,
 A league of mountain full of golden mines,
 A province with a hundred miles of coast,
 A palace and a princess, all for him
 But on all those who tried and fail'd, the
 king
 Pronounced a dismal sentence, meaning
 by it
 To keep the list low and pretenders back,
 Or like a king, not to be trifled with—
 Their heads should moulder on the city
 gates
 And many tried and fail'd, because the
 charm
 Of nature in hei overbore their own
 And many a wizard blow bleach'd on the
 walls
 And many weeks a troop of cannon crows
 Hung like a cloud above the gateway
 towers'

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said
 'I sit and gather honey yet, methinks,
 Thy tongue has tript a little ask thyself
 I he lady never made *unwilling* war
 With those fine eyes she had hei pleasure
 in it,
 And made her good man jealous with good
 cause
 And lived there neither dame nor damsel
 then
 Wroth at a lover's loss? woe all as time,
 I mean, as noble, as then Queen was fair?
 Not one to flint a venom at her eyes,

Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,
O! make her paler with a poison'd rose?
Well, those were not our days but did
they find
A wizard? Tell me, was he like to thee?

She ceased, and made her lithe arm
round his neck
Tighten, and then drew back, and let her
eyes
Speak for her, glowing on him, like a
bride's
On her new lord, her own, the first of men

He answer'd laughing, 'Nay, not like
to me
At last they found—his foragers for
chums—

A little glossy headed hairless man,
Who lived alone in a great wild on grass,
Read but one book, and ever reading
grew

So grated down and filed away with
thought,
So lean his eyes were monstrous, while
the skin

Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and
spine

And since he kept his mind on one sole
aim,

Nor ever touch'd fience wine, nor tasted
flesh,

Nor own'd a sensual wish, to him the wall
That sunders ghosts and shadow casting
men

Became a crystal, and he saw them thro' it,
And heard their voices talk behind the
wall,

And learnt their elemental secrets, powers
And forces, often o'er the sun's bright eye
Drew the vast eyelid of an ink cloud,
And hush'd it at the base with slanting
storm,

O! in the noon of mist and driving rain,
When the lake whiten'd and the pinewood
mould'd,

And the crum'd mountain was a shadow,
sunn'd

The world to peace again here was the
man

And so by force they dragg'd him to the
King

And then he taught the King to charm
the Queen

In such wise, that no man could see her
more,

Nor saw she save the King, who wrought
the charm,

Coming and going, and she lay as dead,
And lost all use of life but when the King
Made proffer of the league of golden mines,
The province with a hundred miles of coast,
The palace and the princess, that old man
Went back to his old wild, and lived on
grass,

And vanish'd, and his book came down
to me'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily
'Ye have the book the charm is written
in it

Good take my counsel let me know it
at once

For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest,
With each chest lock'd and padlock'd
thirty fold,

And whelm all this beneath as vast a
mound

As after furious battle turfs the slum
On some wild down above the windy deep,
I yet should strike upon a sudden means
To dig, pick, open, find and read the
charm

Then, if I tried it, who should blame me
then?

And smiling as a master smiles at one
That is not of his school, nor any school
But that where blind and naked Ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,
On all things all day long, he answer'd her

'Thou read the book, my pretty Vivien'
O ay, it is but twenty pages long,
But every page having an ample maigre,
And every maigre enclosing in the midst
A square of text that looks a little blot,
The text no larger than the limbs of flies,
And every square of text an awful charm,
Writ in a language that has long gone by
So long, that mountains have arisen since

With cities on then flanks—thou read the book !

And every margin scribbled, crost, and ciamm'd

With comment, densest condensation, hard
To mind and eye, but the long sleepless nights

Of my long life have made it easy to me
And none can read the text, not even I,
And none can read the comment but myself,

And in the comment did I find the charm
O, the results are simple, & mere child
Might use it to the hum of anyone,
And never could undo it ask no more
For tho' you should not prove it upon me,
But keep that oath ye swore, ye might,
perchance,

Assay it on some one of the Table Round,
And all because ye dream they babble of
you'

And Vivien, frowning in true anger,
said

'What dare the full-fed liars say of me ?
They ride abroad redressing human
wrongs !

They sit with knife in meat and wine in
horn !

They bound to holy vows of chastity !
Were I not woman, I could tell a tale
But you are man, you well can understand
The shame that cannot be explain'd for
shame

Not one of all the drove should touch me
swine !'

Then answer'd Merlin careless of her
words

'You breathe but accusation vast and
vague,

Spleen-born, I think, and proofless If
ye know,

Set up the charge ye know, to stand or
fall !'

And Vivien answer'd frowning wrath
fully

'O ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him
Whose kinsman left him watcher o'er his
wife

And two fair babes, and went to distant
lands,

Was one year gone, and on returning found
Not two but three ? there lay the reckling,
one

But one hour old ! What said the happy
sire ?

A seven months' babe had been a truer gift
Those twelve sweet moons confused his
fatherhood'

Then answer'd Merlin, 'Nay, I know
the tale

Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame
Some cause had kept him sunder'd from
his wife

One child they had it lived with her
she died

His kinsman travelling on his own affair
Was charged by Valence to bring home
the child

He brought, not found it therefore take
the truth'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'overtrue & tale
What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagamore,
That ardent man ? "to pluck the flower
in season,"

So says the song, "I trow it is no treason"
O Master, shall we call him overquick
To crop his own sweet rose before the
hour ?'

And Merlin answer'd, 'Overquick art
thou

To catch a loathly plume fall'n from the
wing

Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole
prey

Is man's good name he never wrong'd
his bride

I know the tale An angry gust of wind
Puff'd out his torch among the myriad-
room'd

And many-corridor'd complexities
Of Arthur's palace then he found a door,
And darkling felt the sculptured ornament
That wreathen round it made it seem his
own,

And wearied out made for the couch and
slept,

A stainless man beside a stainless maid,
And either slept, nor knew of other there,
Till the high dawn piercing the loyal rose
In Arthur's casement glimmer'd chastely
down,

Blushing upon them blushing, and at once
He rose without a word and parted from
her

But when the thing was blazed about the
court,

The brute world howling forced them into
bonds,

And as it chanced they are happy, being
pure'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'that were likely
too

What say ye then to fur Sir Percivale
And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,
The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of
Christ,

O! some black wether of St Satan's fold
What, in the precincts of the chapel yard,
Among the knightly brasses of the graves,
And by the cold Hic Jacets of the dead'

And Merlin answer'd careless of her
charge,

'A sober man is Percivale and pure,
But once in life was fluster'd with new
wine,

Then paced for coolness in the chapel-
yard,

Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught
And meant to stamp him with her master's
mark,

And that he sinn'd is not believable,
For, look upon his face—but if he sinn'd,
The sin that practice burns into the blood,
And not the one dark hour which brings
remorse,

Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be
O! else were he, the holy king, whose
hymns

Are chanted in the minster, wiser than all
But is your spleen flieth'd out, or have ye
more?'

And Vivien answer'd frowning yet in
wrath

'O ay, what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend

Traitor or true? that commence with the
Queen,

I ask you, is it clamour'd by the child,
O! whisper'd in the corner? do ye know
it?'

To which he answer'd sadly, 'Yea, I
know it

So Lancelot went ambassador, at first,
To fetch her, and she watch'd him from
her walls

A rumour runs, she took him for the King,
So fix her fancy on him let them be
But have ye no one word of loyal praise
For Arthur, blameless King and stainless
man?'

She answer'd with a low and chuckling
laugh

'Man' is he man at all, who knows and
winks?

Sees what his fair bride is and does, and
winks?

By which the good King means to blind
himself,

And blinds himself and all the Table Round
To all the foulness that they work. Myself
Could call him (were it not for womanhood)
The pretty, popular name such manhood
earns,

Could call him the main cause of all their
crime,

Yea, were he not crown'd King, coward,
and fool'

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing,
said

'O true and tender! O my liege and
King!

O selfless man and stainless gentleman,
Who wouldst against thine own eye wit-
ness fail

Have all men true and leal, all women
pure,

How, in the mouths of base interpreters,
From over fineness not intelligible

To things with every sense as false and foul
As the poach'd filth that floods the middle

street,
Is thy white blamelessness accounted
blame!'

But Vivien, deeming Merlin overborne
By instance, recommenced, and let her
tongue

Rage like a fire among the noblest names,
Polluting, and imputing her whole self,
Defaming and defacing, till she left
Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad
clean

Her words had issue other than she
will'd

He diagg'd his eyebrow bushes down,
and made

A snowy penthouse for his hollow eyes,
And mutter'd in himself, 'Tell *her* the
charm'

So, if she had it, would she rail on me
To snare the next, and if she have it not
So will she rail What did the wanton cry?
"Not mount as high," we scarce can sink
as low

For men at most differ as Heaven and
earth,

But women, worst and best, as Heaven
and Hell

I know the Table Round, my friends of
old,

All brave, and many generous, and some
chaste

She clocks the scum of some repulse with
lies,

I well believe she tempted them and fail'd,
Being so bitter for fine plots may fail,
Tho' harlots paint their talk as well as vice
With colours of the heart that are not theirs
I will not let her know nine tithes of
times

Face flatterer and backbiter are the same
And they, sweet soul, that most impute a
crime

Are prone to it, and impute themselves,
Wanting the mental range, or low desire
Not to feel lowest makes them level all,
Yea, they would pare the mountain to the
plain,

To leave an equal baseness, and in this
Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find
Some stain or blemish in a name of note,
Not grieving that their greatest are so
small,

Inflate themselves with some insane
delight,

And judge all nature from her feet of clay,
Without the will to lift their eyes, and see
Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual
fire,

And touching other worlds I am weary
of her'

He spoke in words past heard, in
whispers past,

Half suffocated in the hoary fell
And many winter'd fleece of throat and
chin

But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his
mood,

And hearing 'harlot' mutter'd twice or
thrice,

Leapt from her session on his lap, and
stood

Stiff as a viper frozen, loathsome sight,
How from the rosy lips of life and love,
Flush'd the blue-grinning skeleton of
death'

White was her cheek, sharp breaths of
anger puff'd

Her fury nostril out, her hand half
clench'd

Went fluttering sideways downward to her
belt,

And feeling, had she found a dagger
there

(For in a wink the false love turns to
hate)

She would have stabb'd him, but she
found it not

His eye was calm, and suddenly she took
To bitter weeping like a hearten child,

A long, long weeping, not consolable
Then her false voice made wry, broken
with sobs

'O crueller than was ever told in tale,
Or sung in song! O vainly lavish'd love!
O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,
Or seeming shameful—for what shame in
love,

So love be true, and not as yours is—
nothing

Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust

Who call'd her what he call'd her—all
her crime,
All—all—the wish to prove him wholly
hers'

She mused a little, and then clapt her
hands
Together with a wailing shriek, and said
'Stabb'd through the heart's affections to
the heart'
Seethed like the kid in its own mother's
milk'
Kill'd with a word worse than a life of
blows'

I thought that he was gentle, being great
O God, that I had loved a smaller man!
I should have found in him a greater
heart

O, I, that flattering my true passion, saw
The knights, the court, the King, dark
in your light,

Who loved to make men darker than they
are,

Because of that high pleasure which I
had

To seat you sole upon my pedestal
Of worship—I am answer'd, and hence
forth

The course of life that seem'd so flowery
to me

With you for guide and master, only you,
Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken
short,

And ending in a ruin—nothing left,
But into some low cave to crawl, and
there,

If the wolf spare me, weep my life away,
Kill'd with unutterable unkindness'

She paused, she turn'd away, she hung
her head,
The snake of gold slid from her hair, the
braid

Slept and uncoil'd itself, she wept afresh
And the dark wood grew darker toward
the storm

In silence, while his anger slowly died
Within him, till he let his wisdom go
For ease of heart, and half believed her
true

Call'd her to shelter in the hollow oak,
'Come from the storm,' and having no
reply,

Gazed at the heaving shoulder, and the
face

Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or
shame,

Then thence essay'd, by tenderest touching
terms,

To seek her ruffled peace of mind, in
vain

At last she let herself be conquer'd by him,
And as the cageling newly flown returns,
The seeming injured simple hearted thing
Came to her old perch back, and settled
there

There while she sat, half falling from his
knees,

Half-nestled at his heart, and since he saw
The slow tear creep from her closed eye
lid yet,

About her, more in kindness than in love,
The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm
But she dislink'd herself at once and rose,
Her arms upon her breast across, and
stood,

A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wrong'd,
Upright and flush'd before him then she
said

'There must be now no passages of love
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore,
Since, if I be what I am grossly call'd,
What should be granted which your own
gross heart

Would reckon worth the taking? I will
go

In truth, but one thing now—better have
died

Thrice than have ask'd it once—could
make me stay—

That proof of trust—so often ask'd in
vain'

How justly, after that vile term of yours,
I find with grief! I might believe you
then,

Who knows? once more Lo! what was
once to me

More matter of the fancy, now hath grown
The vast necessity of heart and life

Farewell, think gently of me, for I fear
 My fate or folly, passing greyer youth
 For one so old, must be to love thee still
 But ere I leave thee let me swear once
 more
 That if I schemed against thy peace in
 this,
 May yon just heaven, that darkens o'er
 me, send
 One flash, that, missing all things else,
 may make
 My scheming brain a cinder, if I lie'

Scarcely had she ceased, when out of
 heaven a bolt
 (For now the storm was close above them)
 struck,
 Following a giant oak, and javelining
 With darted spikes and splinters of the
 wood
 The dark earth round. He raised his
 eyes and saw
 The tree that shone white listed thro' the
 gloom
 But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her
 oath,
 And dazzled by the livid flickering fork,
 And deafen'd with the stammering cracks
 and claps
 That follow'd, flying back and crying out,
 'O Merlin, tho' you do not love me, save,
 Yet save me!' clung to him and hugg'd
 him close,
 And call'd him dear protector in her
 fight,
 Nor yet forgot her practice in her flight,
 But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd
 him close
 The pale blood of the wizard at her touch
 Took greyer colours, like an opal warm'd
 She blamed herself for telling hearsay
 tales
 She shook from fear, and for her fault
 she wept
 Of petulancy, she call'd him lord and
 liege,
 Her seer, her baird, her silver star of eve,
 Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate
 love
 Of her whole life, and ever overhead

Bellow'd the tempest, and the rotten
 branch
 Snapt in the rushing of the river run
 Above them, and in change of glare and
 gloom
 Her eyes and neck glittering went and
 came,
 Till now the storm, its burst of passion
 spent,
 Morning and calling out of other lands,
 Had left the ravaged woodland yet once
 more
 To peace, and what should not have been
 had been,
 For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn,
 Had yielded, told her all the chum, and
 slept

Then, in one moment, she put forth
 the chum
 Of woven prices and of waving hands,
 And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
 And lost to life and use and name and
 fume

Then crying 'I have made his glory
 mine,'
 And shuddering out 'O fool!' the harlot
 leapt
 Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
 Behind her, and the forest echo'd 'fool'

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

ELAINE the fair, Elaine the loveable,
 Elaine, the lily maid of Astolt,
 High in her chamber up a tower to the
 east
 Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot,
 Which first she placed where morning's
 earliest ray
 Might strike it, and awake her with the
 gleam,
 Then fearing rust or soiled fashion'd for it
 A robe of silk, and braided thereupon
 All the devices blazon'd on the shield
 In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,
 A border fantasy of branch and flower,
 And yellow throated nestling in the nest
 Nor rested thus content, but day by day,

Leaving her household and good father,
climb'd
That eastern tower, and entering barr'd
her door,
Strip'd off the case, and read the naked
shield,
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his
arms,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had berten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made
upon it,
Conjecturing when and where this cut
is fresh,
That ten years back, this dealt him at
Caerlyle,
That at Caerleon, this at Camelot
And ah God's mercy, what a stroke was
there!
And here a thrust that might have kill'd,
but God
Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his
enemy down,
And saved him so she lived in fantasy

How came the lily maid by that good
shield
Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his
name?
He left it with her, when he rode to tilt
For the great diamond in the diamond
jousts,
Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that
name
Had named them, since a diamond was
the prize

' For Arthur, long before they crown'd
him King,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black
tarn
A honor lived about the tarn, and drove
Like its own mists to all the mountain
side
For here two brothers, one a king, had
met
And fought together, but their names
were lost,
And each had slain his brother at a blow,

And down they fell and made the glen
abhor'd
And there they lay till all their bones
were bleach'd,
And lichen'd into colour with the crags
And he, that once was king, had on a
crown
Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside
And Arthur came, and labouring up the
pass,
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and
the skull
Blake from the nape, and from the skull
the crown
Roll'd into light, and turning on its rim
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn
And down the shingly scour he plunged,
and caught,
And set it on his head, and in his heart
Heard murmurs, 'Lo, thou likewise shalt
be King'

Thereafter, when a King, he had the
gems
Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them
to his knights,
Saying, 'These jewels, whereupon I
chanced
Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the
King's—
For public use henceforward let there be,
Once every year, a joust for one of these
For so by nine years' proof we needs
must learn
Which is our mightiest, and ourselves
shall grow
In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule
the land
Hereafter, which God hinder' Thus he
spoke
And eight years past, eight jousts had
been, and still
Had Lancelot won the diamond of the
year,
With purpose to present them to the
Queen,
When all were won, but meaning all at
once

To snare her royal fancy with a boon
Worth half her realm, had never spoken
word

Now for the central diamond and the
last
And largest, Arthur, holding then his
court
Hard on the inner high the place which
now

Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
Sprake (for she had been sick) to Guine
vere,

'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot
move

To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she
said, 'ye know it'

'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the
great deeds

Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
A sight ye love to look on' And the
Queen

Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the
King

He thinking that he read her meaning
there,

'Stay with me, I am sick, my love is
more

Than many diamonds,' yielded, and a
heart

Love loyal to the last wish of the Queen
(However much he yearn'd to make
complete

The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)
Urged him to speak against the truth,
and say,

'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly
whole,

And lets me from the saddle,' and the
King

Glanced first at him, then her, and went
his way

No sooner gone than suddenly she began

'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot,
much to blame'

Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the
knights

Are half of them our enemies, and the
crowd

Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones,
who take

Their pastime now the trustful King is
gone!"

Then Lancelot vent at having lied in vain
'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,
My Queen, that summer, when ye loved
me first

Then of the crowd ye took no more account
I than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
When its own voice clings to each blade
of grass,

And every voice is nothing As to
knights,

Them surely can I silence with all ease
But now my loyal worship is allow'd

Of all men many a lord, without offence,
Has link'd our names together in his lay,
Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guine
vere,

The pearl of beauty and our knights at
feast

Have pledged us in this union, while the
King

Would listen smiling How then? is
there more?

Has Arthur spoken aught? or would
yourself,

Now weary of my service and devotion,
Henceforth be true to your faultless lord?

She broke into a little scornful laugh
'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless
King,

That passionate perfection, my good
lord—

But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?
He never spake word of reproach to me,

He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
He cares not for me only here to die

Here glim'd a vague suspicion in his
eyes

Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with
him—else

Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
And swearing men to vows impossible,

To make them like himself but, friend,
to me

He is all fault who hath no fault at all
For who loves me must have a touch of
earth,
The low sun makes the colour I am yours,
Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the
bond
And therefore hear my words go to the
jousts
The tiny trumpeting grut can break our
dream
When sweetest, and the vermin voices here
May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but
they sting'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of
knights
'And with what face, after my pretext
made,
Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
Before a King who honours his own
word,
As if it were his God's?'

'Yes,' said the Queen,
'A mortal child without the craft to rule,
Else had he not lost me but listen to me,
If I must find you wit we have it said
That men go down before your spear at
a touch,
But knowing you are Lancelot, your great
name,
This conquers hide it therefore, go
unknown
Win! by this kiss you will and our true
king
Will then allow your pretext, O my
knight,
As all for glory, for to speak him true,
Ye know right well, how meek soever he
seem,
No keener hunter after glory breathes
He loves it in his knights more than
himself
They prove to him his work won and
return'

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
With at himself Not willing to be
known,
He left the barren beaten thoroughfare,

Chose the green path that show'd the
rare foot,
And there among the solitary downs,
Full often lost in fancy, lost his way,
Till as he traced a faintly shadow'd track,
That all in loops and links among the
dules
Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
Fled from the west, far on a hill, the
towers
Thither he made, and blew the gateway
horn
Then came an old, dumb, myriad
winkled man,
Who let him into lodging and disarm'd
And Lancelot movell'd at the wordless
man,
And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
With two strong sons, Sir Toire and Sir
Lavaune,
Moving to meet him in the castle court,
And close behind them stept the hly maid
Elaine, his daughter mother of the house
There was not some light just among
them rose
With laughter dying down as the great
knight
Approach'd them then the Lord of
Astolat
'Whence comest thou, my guest, and by
what name
Livest between the lips? for by thy state
And presence I might guess thee chief of
those,
After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls
Him have I seen the rest, his table
Round,
Known as they are, to me they are un
known'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of
knights
'Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and
known,
What I by mere mischance have brought,
my shield
But since I go to joust as one unknown
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not,
Hereafter ye shall know me—and the
shield—

I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not
mine'

Then said the Lord of Astolat, 'Here
is Torre's
Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre
And so, God wot, his shield is blank
enough

His ye can have' Then added plain Sir
Torre,

'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have
it'

Here laugh'd the father saying, 'Fie, Sir
Churl,

Is that an answer for a noble knight?

Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger
here,

He is so full of lusthood, he will ride,
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an
hour,

And set it in this damsel's golden hair,
To make her thence as wilful as before'

'Nay, father, nay good father, shame
me not

Before this noble knight,' said young
Lavaine,

'For nothing! Surely I but play'd on
Torre

He seem'd so sullen, next he could not go
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden
dreamt

That some one put this diamond in her
hand,

And that it was too slippery to be held,
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
The castle well, belike, and then I said
That if I went and if I fought and won it
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves)
Then must she keep it safer! All was
jest

But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight
Win shall I not, but do my best to win
Young as I am, yet would I do my best'

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd
Lancelot,

Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship

O'er these waste downs whereon I lost
myself,

Then were I glad of you as guide and
friend

And you shall win this diamond,—as I
hear

It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will'

'A fair large diamond,' added plain Sir
Torre,

'Such be for queens, and not for simple
maids'

Then she, who held her eyes upon the
ground,

Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
Flush'd slightly at the slight disparagement

Before the stranger knight, who, looking
at her,

Full courteously, yet not falsely, thus return'd
'If what is fair be but for what is fair,

And only queens are to be counted so,
Rash were my judgment then, who deem
this maid

Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
Not violating the bond of like to like'

He spoke and ceased the lily maid
Elaine,

Won by the mellow voice before she look'd,
Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments

The great and guilty love he bore the
Queen,

In battle with the love he bore his lord,
Had mark'd his face, and mark'd it ere
his time

Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the
world,

Had been the sleeker for it but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose

And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul

Maid as he was, he seem'd the goodliest
man

That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes

However maid'd, of more than twice her
years,

Seam'd with an ancient swordcut on the
cheek,

Afraid bruised and bronzed, she lifted up
her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was
her doom

Then the great knight, the darling of
the court,
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
Stept with all grace, and not with half
disdain

Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
But kindly man moving among his kind
Whom they with meats and vintage of
their best

And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd
And much they ask'd of court and Table
Round,

And ever well and readily answer'd he
But Lancelot, when they glanced at
Guinevere,

Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
Heard from the Baron that, ten years
before,

The heathen caught and reft him of his
tongue

'He leant and wun'd me of then fierce
design

Against my house, and him they caught
and main'd,

But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
From bonds or death, and dwelt among
the woods

By the great river in a boatman's hut
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur
broke

The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill'

'O there, great lord, doubtless,' Lorraine
said, rapt

By all the sweet and sudden passion of
youth

Toward greatness in its elder, 'you have
fought

O tell us—for we live apart—you know
Of Arthur's glorious wais' And Lancelot
spoke

And answer'd him at full, as having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long
Rang by the white mouth of the violent
Glen,

And in the four loud battles by the shore
Of Duglins, that on Bassa, then the war
That thunder'd in and out the gloomy
skits

Of Celidon the forest, and again
By castle Gurnion, where the glorious
King

Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
Carved of one emerald center'd in a sun
Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he
breathed,

And at Caerleon had he help'd his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild
white Horse

Set every gilded parapet shuddering,
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
And down the waste sand shores of Tlath
Tretot,

Where many a heathen fell, 'and on the
mount

Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legions crying Christ and him,
And break them, and I saw him, after,
stand

High on a heap of slain, from spurs to
plume

Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,
'They are broken, they are broken!'
for the King,

However mild he seems at home, nor cares
For triumph in our mimic wais, the
jousts—

For if his own knight cast him down, he
laughs

Saying, his knights are better men than
he—

Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
Fills him I never saw his like there lives
No greater leader'

While he utter'd this,
Low to her own heart sud the lily maid,
'Save you great self, fair lord,' and
when he fell

From talk of war to traits of pleasant—
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind—
She still took note that when the living
smile

Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
Of melancholy severe, from which again,
Whenever in her hovering to and fro
The lily maid had striven to make him
cheer,

There broke a sudden beaming tenderness
Of manners and of nature and she
thought

That all was nature, all, perchance, for her
And all night long his face before her lived,
As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and colour of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest, so the face before her lived,
Dark splendid, speaking in the silence,
full

Of noble things, and held her from her
sleep

Till rith she rose, half cheated in the
thought

She needs must bid farewell to sweet
Lorraine

First as in fear, step after step, she stole
Down the long tower stairs, hesitating
Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the
court,

'This shield, my friend, where is it?'
and Lorraine

Past inward, as she came from out the
tower

There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd,
and smooth'd

The glossy shoulder, humming to himself
Half-envious of the flattering hand, she
drew

Nearer and stood He look'd, and more
amazed

Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
The maiden standing in the dewy light
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
Rapt on his face as if it were a God's
Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire,
That he should wear her favour at the tilt
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it
'Fair lord, whose name I know not—
noble it is,

I well believe, the noblest—will you wear
My favour at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said
he,

'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
Favour of any lady in the lists

Such is my wont, as those, who know me,
know'

'Yet, so,' she answer'd, 'then in wearing
mine

Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble
lord,

That those who know should know you'
And he turn'd

Her counsel up and down within his mind,
And found it true, and answer'd, 'True,
my child

Well, I will wear it fetch it out to me
What is it?' and she told him 'A red
sleeve

Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it
then he bound

Her to him on his helmet, with a smile
Saying, 'I never yet have done so much
For any maiden living,' and the blood
Spring to her face and fill'd her with
delight,

But left her all the paler, when Lorraine
Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd
shield,

His brother's, which he gave to Lancelot,
Who putted with his own to suit Elaine
'Do me this grace, my child, to have my
shield

In keeping till I come' 'A grace to me,'
She answer'd, 'twice to day I am your
squire'

Whereat Lorraine said, laughing, 'Lily
maiden,

For fear our people call you lily maid
In earnest, let me bring your colour back,
Once, twice, and thrice now get you
hence to bed'

So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own
hand,

And thus they moved away she stay'd
a minute,

Then made a sudden step to the gate,
and there—

Her bright hair blown about the serious
face

Yet rosy kindled with her brother's kiss—
 Paused by the gateway, standing near
 the shield
 In silence, while she watch'd their arms
 far-off
 Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs
 Then to her tower she climb'd, and took
 the shield,
 There kept it, and so lived in fantasy

Meanwhile the new companions past
 away
 Far o'er the long backs of the bushless
 downs,
 To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived
 a knight
 Not far from Camelot, now for forty years
 A hermit, who had pray'd, labour'd and
 pray'd,
 And ever labouring had scoop'd himself
 In the white rock a chapel and a hall
 On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,
 And cells and chambers all were fan
 and dry,
 The green light from the meadows under
 neath
 Struck up and lived along the milky roofs,
 And in the meadow stremulous aspen trees
 And poplars made a noise of falling
 shadows
 And thither wending there that night they
 bode

But when the next day broke from
 underground,
 And shot red fire and shadows thro' the
 cave,
 They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and
 rode away
 Then Lancelot saying, 'Hear, but hold
 my name
 Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the
 Lake,'
 Abash'd Lorraine, whose instant revele
 ence,
 Dearer to true young hearts than their
 own praise,
 But left him leave to stammer, 'Is it
 indeed?'
 And after muttering 'The great Lancelot,'

At last he got his breath and answer'd,
 'One,
 One have I seen—that other, our liege
 lord,
 The dead Pendiagon, Britain's King of
 kings,
 Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
 He will be there—then were I stricken
 blind
 That minute, I might say that I had seen'

So spake Lorraine, and when they
 reach'd the lists
 By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
 Run thro' the peopled gallery which half
 round
 Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
 Until they found the clear faced King,
 who sat
 Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
 Since to his crown the golden dragon
 clung,
 And down his robe the dragon writhed
 in gold,
 And from the carved work behind him
 crept
 Two dragons gilded, sloping down to
 make
 Arms for his chair, while all the rest of
 them
 Thro' knots and loops and folds innume
 rable
 Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they
 found
 The new design wherein they lost them
 selves,
 Yet with all ease, so tender was the work
 And, in the costly canopy over him set,
 Blazed the last diamond of the nameless
 king

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lorraine
 and said,
 'May you call great mine is the timor
 ous
 The true lance but there is many a youth
 Now crescent, who will come to all I am
 And overcome it, and in me there dwells
 No greatness, save it be some far off touch
 Of greatness to know well I am not great

There is the man ' And Lavaine gaped
 upon him
 As on a thing miraculous, and anon
 The trumpets blew, and then did either
 side,
 They that assail'd, and they that held the
 lists,
 Set lance in rest, strike spurs, suddenly
 move,
 Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
 Shock, that a man far off might well
 perceive,
 If any man that day were left afield,
 The hard earth shake, and a low thunder
 of arms
 And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
 Which were the weaker, then he hui'd
 into it
 Against the stronger little need to speak
 Of Lancelot in his glory ' King, duke,
 earl,
 Count, baron—whom he smote, he over
 threw

But in the field were Lancelot's kith
 and kin,
 Ranged with the Table Round that held
 the lists,
 Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger
 knight
 Should do and almost overdo the deeds
 Of Lancelot, and one said to the other,
 'Lo '
 What is he? I do not mean the force
 alone—
 The grace and versatility of the man '
 Is it not Lancelot? ' When has Lance
 lot worn
 Favour of any lady in the lists?
 Not such his wont, as we, that know him,
 know '
 'How then? who then?' a fury seized
 them all,
 A fiery family passion for the name
 Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs
 They couch'd their spears and prick'd their
 steeds, and thus,
 Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind
 they made
 In moving, all together down upon him

Bore, as a wild wave in the wide North sea,
 Green glimmering toward the summit,
 bears, with all
 Its stormy crests that smoke against the
 skies,
 Down on a bairn, and overbears the bairn,
 And him that helms it, so they overbore
 Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
 Down glancing lamed the charger, and a
 spear
 Prick'd shaply his own cuivass, and the
 herd
 Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt,
 and remain'd

Then Sir Lavaine did well and wor
 shipfully,
 He bore a knight of old repute to the
 earth,
 And brought his horse to Lancelot where
 he lay
 He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
 But thought to do while he might yet
 endure,
 And being lustily holpen by the rest,
 His party,—tho' it seem'd half miracle
 To those he fought with,—drew his kith
 and kin,
 And all the Table Round that held the
 lists,
 Back to the barrier, then the trumpets
 blew
 Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the
 sleeve
 Of sculet, and the pearls, and all the
 knights,
 His party, cried 'Advance and take thy
 prize
 The diamond,' but he answer'd, 'Diamond
 me
 No diamonds ' for God's love, a little air '
 Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death '
 Hence will I, and I charge you, follow
 me not '

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from
 the field
 With young Lavaine into the poplar grove
 There from his charger down he slid, and
 sat,

Gasping to Sir Lavaine, 'Draw the lance
head'
'Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said
Lavaine,
'I dread me, if I draw it, you will die'
But he, 'I die already with it draw—
Draw,'—and Lavaine drew, and Sir
Lancelot gave
A marvellous great shriek and ghastly
groan,
And half his blood burst forth, and down
he sank
For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd
away
Then came the hermit out and bade him
in,
There stanch'd his wound, and there, in
daily doubt
Whether to live or die, for many a week
Hid from the wide world's rumour by the
grove
Of poplars with their noise of falling
showers,
And ever-tremulous aspen trees, he lay

But on that day when Lancelot fled the
lists,
His party, knights of utmost North and
West,
Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate
isles,
Came round their great Pendragon, saying
to him,
'Lo, Sir, our knight, thro' whom we
won the day,
Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left
his prize
Untaken, crying that his prize is death'
'Heaven hinder,' said the King, 'that
such an one,
So great a knight as we have seen to-day—
He seem'd to me another Lancelot—
Yea, twenty times I thought him Lance-
lot—
He must not pass uncared for Where-
fore, rise,
O Gawain, and ride forth and find the
knight
Wounded and wearied needs must he be
near

I charge you that you get at once to horse
And, knights and kings, there breathes
not one of you
Will deem this prize of ours is rashly
given
His prowess was too wondrous We will
do him
No customary honour since the knight
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,
Ourselves will send it after Rise and take
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,
And bring us where he is, and how he
fares,
And cease not from your quest until ye
find'

So saying, from the cypress flower above,
To which it made a restless heart, he took,
And gave, the diamond then from where
he sat
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose,
With smiling face and frowning heart, a
Prince
In the mid night and flourish of his May,
Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair
and strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and
Geraunt
And Gareth, a good knight, but there-
withal
Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot,
Not often loyal to his word, and now
With that the King's command to sally
forth
In quest of whom he knew not, made him
leave
The banquet, and concourse of knights
and kings

So all in wrath he got to horse and
went,
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in
mood,
Past, thinking 'Is it Lancelot who hath
come
Despite the wound he spake of, all for
gain
Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,
And add'n away to die?' So fear'd the
King,

And, after two days' tariance there,
 return'd
 Then when he saw the Queen, embrac-
 ing ask'd,
 'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay,
 lord,' she said
 'And where is Lancelot?' Then the
 Queen amazed,
 'Was he not with you? won he not your
 prize?'
 'Nay, but one like him' 'Why that like
 was he'
 And when the King demanded how she
 knew,
 Said, 'Lord, no sooner had ye parted
 from us,
 Than Lancelot told me of a common
 talk
 That men went down before his spear at
 a touch,
 But knowing he was Lancelot, his great
 name
 Conquer'd, and therefore would he hide
 his name
 From all men, ev'n the King, and to this
 end
 Had made the pretext of a hindering
 wound,
 That he might joust unknown of all, and
 learn
 If his old prowess were in right decay'd,
 And added, "Our true Arthur, when he
 learns,
 Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
 Of pure glory"

Then replied the King
 'Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
 In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
 To have trusted me as he hath trusted
 thee
 Surely his King and most familiar friend
 Might well have kept his secret True,
 indeed,
 Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
 So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
 Must needs have moved my laughter
 now remains
 But little cause for laughter his own
 kin—

Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him,
 this —
 His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon
 him,
 So that he went sore wounded from the
 field
 Yet good news too for goodly hopes are
 mine
 That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart
 He wore, against his wont, upon his helm
 A sleeve of scarlet, broader'd with great
 pearls,
 Some gentle maiden's gift'

'Yea, lord,' she said,
 'Thy hopes are mine,' and saying that,
 she choked,
 And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,
 Past to her chamber, and there flung
 herself
 Down on the great King's couch, and
 writhed upon it,
 And clench'd her fingers till they bit the
 palm,
 And shriek'd out 'Traitor' to the un-
 heaving wall,
 Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose
 again,
 And moved about her palace, proud and
 pale

Gawain the while thro' all the region
 round
 Rode with his diamond, warned of the
 quest,
 Touch'd at all points, except the poplar
 grove,
 And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat
 Whom glittering in enunell'd arms the
 maid
 Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from
 Camelot, lord?'
 What of the knight with the red sleeve?'
 'He won'
 'I knew it,' she said 'But parted from
 the jousts
 Hurt in the side,' whereat she caught her
 breath,
 Tho' her own side she felt the sharp
 lance go,

Thereon she smote her hand wellnigh
 she swoon'd
 And, while he gazed wonderingly at her,
 came
 The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the
 Prince
 Reported who he was, and on what quest
 sent, that he bore the prize and could not
 find
 The victor, but had ridd'n a random
 round
 To seek him, and had wearied of the
 search
 To whom the Lord of Astolat, 'Bide with
 us,
 And ride no more at random, noble
 Prince'
 Here was the knight, and here he left a
 shield,
 This will he send or come for further
 more
 Our son is with him, we shall hear anon,
 Needs must we hear ' To this the cour-
 teous Prince
 Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
 Courtesy with a touch of truth in it,
 And stay'd, and cast his eyes on fair
 Elaine
 Where could be found face daintier? then
 her shape
 From forehead down to foot, perfect—
 again
 From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd
 'Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for
 me!'
 And oft they met among the garden yews,
 And there he set himself to play upon her
 With sallying wit, free flashes from a
 height
 Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
 Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden elo-
 quence
 And amorous adulation, till the maid
 Rebell'd against it, saying to him, 'Prince,
 O loyal nephew of our noble King,
 Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
 Whence you might learn his name? Why
 slight your King,
 And lose the quest he sent you on, and
 prove

No surer than our falcon yesterday,
 Who lost the henn we slept her at, and
 went
 To all the winds?' 'Nay, by mine
 head,' said he,
 'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
 O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes,
 But an ye will it let me see the shield'
 And when the shield was brought, and
 Gawain saw
 Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with
 gold,
 Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh,
 and mock'd
 'Right was the King! our Lancelot!
 that true man!'
 'And right was I,' she answer'd merrily,
 'I,
 Who deem'd my knight the greatest
 knight of all'
 'And if I deem'd,' said Gawain, 'that
 you love
 This greatest knight, your pardon! lo,
 ye know it!
 Speak therefore shall I waste myself in
 vain?
 Full simple was her answer, 'What know
 I?
 My brethren have been all my fellow
 ship,
 And I, when often they have talk'd of
 love,
 Wish'd it had been my mother, for they
 talk'd,
 Meseem'd, of what they knew not, so
 myself—
 I know not if I know what true love is,
 But if I know, then, if I love not him,
 I know there is none other I can love'
 'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'ye love
 him well,
 But would not, knew ye what all others
 know,
 And whom he loves?' 'So be it,' cried
 Elaine,
 And lifted her fair face and moved away
 But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a
 little!
 One golden minute's grace! he wore
 your sleeve

Would he break faith with one I may not
name?

Must our true man change like a leaf at
last?

Nay—like enow why then, far be it
from me

To cross our mighty Lancelot in his
loves!

And, damsel, for I deem you know full
well

Where your great knight is hidden, let
me leave

My quest with you, the diamond also
here!

For if you love, it will be sweet to give it,
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
From your own hand, and whether he
love or not,

A diamond is a diamond Fare you well
A thousand times!—a thousand times
farewell!

Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we
two

May meet at court hereafter there, I
think,

So ye will learn the courtesies of the
court,

We two shall know each other!

Then he gave,
And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he
gave,

The diamond, and all wearied of the
quest

Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he
went

A true love ballad, lightly rode away

Thence to the court he past, there told
the King

What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is
the knight'

And added, 'Sue, my liege, so much I
learnt,

But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all
round

The region but I lighted on the maid
Whose sleeve he wore, she loves him,
and to her,

Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,

I gave the diamond she will render it,
For by mine head she knows his hiding-
place'

The seldom frowning King frown'd,
and replied,

'Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more
On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings'

He spake and parted Wioth, but all
in awe,

For twenty strokes of the blood, without
a word,

Linger'd that other, staring after him,
Then shook his hair, stode off, and
buzz'd abroad

About the maid of Astolat, and her love
All ears were pick'd at once, all tongues
were loosed

'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lance-
lot,

Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat'
Some read the King's face, some the
Queen's, and all

Had marvel what the maid might be, but
most

Piedoom'd her as unworthy One old
dame

Came suddenly on the Queen with the
sharp news

She, that had heard the noise of it
before,

But sorrowing Lancelot should have
stoop'd so low,

Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tran-
quillity

So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine days' wonder
flared

Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or
thrice

Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the
Queen,

And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen,
who sat

With lips severely placid, felt the knot
Clumb in her throat, and with her feet
unseen

Crush'd the wild passion out against the
floor
Beneath the banquet, where the meats
became
As wormwood, and she hated all who
pledged

But far away the maid in Astolat,
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one day-seen Sir Lancelot in her
heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face
and said,
'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours who let me have my will, and
now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my
wits?'
'Nay,' said he, 'surely' 'Wherefore,
let me hence,'
She answer'd, 'and find out our dear
Lavaune'
'Ye will not lose your wits for dear
Lavaune
Bide,' answer'd he 'we needs must hear
anon
Of him, and of that other' 'Ay,' she
said,
'And of that other, for I needs must hence
And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,
And with mine own hand give his diamond
to him,
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
As yon proud Prince who left the quest
to me
Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Death pale, for lack of gentle maiden's
aid
The gentle-born the maiden, the more
bound,
My father, to be sweet and serviceable
To noble knights in sickness, as ye know
When these have worn their tokens let
me hence
I play you' Then her father nodding
said,
'Ay, ay, the diamond wit ye well, my
child,

Right fain were I to learn this knight
were whole,
Being our greatest yea, and you must
give it—
And sure I think this fruit is hung too
high
For any mouth to gape for save a
queen's—
Nay, I mean nothing so then, get you
gone,
Being so very wilful you must go'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slept away,
And while she made her ready for her
ride,
Her father's latest word humm'd in her
ear,
'Being so very wilful you must go,'
And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,
'Being so very wilful you must die'
But she was happy enough and shook it
off,
As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us,
And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
'What matter, so I help him back to life?'
Then far away with good Sir Torre for
guide
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless
downs
To Camelot, and before the city gates
Came on her brother with a happy face
Making a roan horse cape and cuivet
For pleasure all about a field of flowers
Whom when she saw, 'Lavaune,' she
cried, 'Lavaune,
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He
amazed,
'Torre and Elaine' why here? Sir
Lancelot'
How know ye my lord's name is Lance
lot?'
But when the maid had told him all her
tale,
Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his
moods
Left them, and under the strange-statued
gate,
Where Arthur's was were render'd
mystically,
Past up the still rich city to his kin,

His own far blood, which dwelt at
 Camelot,
 And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove
 Led to the caves there first she saw the
 casque
 Of Lancelot on the wall her sculpt
 sleeve,
 Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls
 away,
 Stream'd from it still, and in her heart
 she hugh'd,
 Because he had not loosed it from his
 helm,
 But meant once more perchance to tour-
 ney in it
 And when they gain'd the cell wherein
 he slept,
 His battle withen arms and mighty hands
 Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream
 Of dragging down his enemy made them
 move
 Then she that saw him lying unsleek,
 unshorn,
 Grunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry
 The sound not wonted in a place so still
 Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd
 his eyes
 Yet blank from sleep, she started to him,
 saying,
 'Your prize the diamond sent you by the
 King'
 His eyes glisten'd she fancied 'Is it for
 me?'
 And when the maid had told him all the
 tale
 Of King and Prince, the diamond sent,
 the quest
 Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt
 Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
 And laid the diamond in his open hand
 Her face was near, and as we kiss the
 child
 That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her
 face
 At once she slept like water to the floor
 'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied
 you
 Rest must you have' 'No rest for me,'
 she said,

'Nay, for now you, fair lord, I am at rest'
 What might she mean by that? his huge
 black eyes,
 Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon
 her,
 Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
 In the heart's colours on her simple face
 And Lancelot look'd and was perplex'd in
 mind,
 And being weak in body said no more,
 But did not love the colour, woman's
 love,
 Give one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
 Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the
 fields,
 And past beneath the weirdly sculptured
 gates
 Far up the dim rich city to her kin,
 There bode the night but woke with
 dawn, and past
 Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
 Thence to the cave so day by day she
 past
 In either twilight ghost like to and fro
 Gliding, and every day she tended him,
 And likewise many a night and Lancelot
 Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little
 hurt
 Whereof he should be quickly whole, at
 times
 Bearn furious in his heart and agony,
 seem
 Uncounteous, even he but the meek
 maid
 Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
 Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
 Milder than any mother to a sick child,
 And never woman yet, since man's first
 fall,
 Did kinder unto man, but her deep love
 Upbore her, till the hermit, skill'd in all
 The simples and the science of that time,
 Told him that her fine care had saved his
 life
 And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
 Would call her friend and sister, sweet
 Elaine,
 Would listen for her coming and regret

Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the
love
Of man and woman when they love their
best,
Closest and sweetest, and had died the
death
In any knightly fashion for her sake
And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other
world
Another world for the sick man, but now
The shackles of an old love staiten'd
him,
His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true

Yet the great knight in his mid sick-
ness made
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve
These, as but born of sickness, could not
live
For when the blood ran lustier in him
again,
Full often the bright image of one face,
Making a treacherous quit in his heart,
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud
Then if the madden, while that ghostly
grace
Bearn'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd
not,
Or short and coldly, and she knew right
well
What the rough sickness meant, but what
this meant
She knew not, and the sorrow dumm'd
her sight,
And drive her ere her time across the
fields
Full into the rich city, where alone
She mumm'd, 'Vain, in vain it cannot
be
He will not love me how then? must
I die?'
Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plum passage of few
notes,
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid

Went half the night repeating, 'Must I
die?'
And now to right she turn'd, and now to
left,
And found no ease in turning or in rest,
And 'Him or death,' she mutter'd,
'death or him,'
Again and like a burthen, 'Him or death'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt
was whole,
To Astolat returning rode the three
There morn by morn, amaying her sweet
self
In that wherein she deem'd she look'd
her best,
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she
thought
'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall'
And Lancelot ever prest upon the mud
That she should ask some goodly gift of
him
For her own self or his, 'and do not
shun
To speak the wish most new to your true
heart,
Such service have ye done me, that I make
My will of yours, and Prince and Lord
am I
In mine own land, and what I will I can'
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to
speak
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her
wish,
And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it, and one morn it
chanced
He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, 'Dely no longer, speak your
wish,
Sceing I go to day' then out she brake
'Going' and we shall never see you more
And I must die for want of one bold word'
'Speak that I live to hear,' he said, 'is
yours'
Then suddenly and passionately she spoke
'I have gone mad I love you let me
die'

'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'

And innocently extending her white arms,
'Your love,' she said, 'your love—to be your wife'

And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen to wed,

I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine
But now there never will be wife of mine'
'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,

But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world'

And Lancelot answer'd, 'Nay, the world, the world,

All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue

To blare its own interpretation—nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,

And your good father's kindness' And she said,

'Not to be with you, not to see your face—
Alas for me then, my good days are done'
'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten times nay'

This is not love but love's first flash in youth,

Most common yea, I know it of mine own self

And you yourself will smile at your own self

Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life

To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age

And then will I, for true you are and sweet

Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,
More specially should you good knight be poor,

Endow you with broad land and territory
Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,

So that would make you happy further more,

Ev'n to the death, as tho' ye were my blood,

In all your quarrels will I be your knight
This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
And more than this I cannot'

While he spoke
She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly pale

Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied

'Of all this will I nothing,' and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her tower

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew

Their talk had pierced, her father 'Ay, a flash,

I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot
I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
To blunt or break her passion'

Lancelot said,
'That were against me what I can I will,'

And there that day remain'd, and toward even

Sent for his shield full meekly rose the maid,

Stuport off the case, and gave the naked shield,

Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,

Unclasp'd flung the casement back, and look'd

Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone

And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound,

And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him

And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,

Nor bid farewell, but sadly rode away
This was the one discourtesy that he used

So in her tower alone the maiden sat
His very shield was gone, only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labour, left

But still she heard him, still his picture
form'd
And grew between her and the pictured
wall
Then came her father, saying in low tones,
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted
quietly
Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace
to thee,
Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all
calm
But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant
field
Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd,
the owls
Wailing had power upon her, and she
melt
Her fancies with the sorrow-lifted glooms
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind

And in those days she made a little
song,
And call'd her song 'The Song of Love
and Death,'
And sang it sweetly could she make
and sing

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain,
in vain,
And sweet is death who puts an end to
pain
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter
death must be
Love, thou art bitter, sweet is death to
me
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die

'Sweet love, that seems not made to
fade away,
Sweet death, that seems to make us love
less clay,
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I

'I fain would follow love, if that could
be,
I needs must follow death, who calls for
me,
Call and I follow, I follow 'let me die'

III

High with the last line scaled her voice,
and this,
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard,
and thought
With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of
the house
That ever shrinks before a death,' and
call'd
The father, and all three in hurry and fear
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light
of dawn
Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let
me die!'

As when we dwell upon a word we
know,
Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
So dwelt the father on her face, and
thought
'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,
Then gave a languid hand to each, and
lay,
Speaking a still good morrow with her
eyes
At last she said, 'Sweet brothers, yester
night
I seem'd a curious little maid again,
As happy as when we dwelt among the
woods,
And when ye used to take me with the
flood

Up the great river in the boatman's boat
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape
That has the poplar on it there ye fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide
And yet I cried because ye would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King
And yet ye would not, but this night I
dream'd
That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, "Now shall I have my
will"

And there I woke, but still the wish
remain'd
So let me hence that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
Until I find the palace of the King

D

There will I enter in among them all,
 And no man there will dare to mock at
 me,
 But there the fine Gawain will wonder at
 me,
 And there the great Sir Lancelot muse
 at me,
 Gawain, who bad a thousand farewells to
 me,
 Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bad me
 one
 And there the King will know me and
 my love,
 And there the Queen herself will pity me,
 And all the gentle court will welcome me,
 And after my long voyage I shall rest."

"Peace," said her father, "O my child,
 ye seem
 Light-headed, for what force is yours to
 go
 So far, being sick? and wherefore would
 ye look
 On this proud fellow again, who scorns
 us all?"

Then the rough Torre began to heave
 and move,
 And bluster into stormy sobs and say,
 "I never loved him nor I met with
 him,
 I care not howsoever great he be,
 Then will I strike at him and strike him
 down,
 Give me good fortune, I will strike him
 dead,
 For this discomfort he hath done the
 house."

To whom the gentle sister made reply,
 "Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be
 wroth,
 Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
 Not to love me, than it is mine to love
 Him of all men who seems to me the
 highest."

"Highest?" the father answered, echoing
 "highest?"
 (He meant to break the passion in her)
 "nay,

Daughter, I know not what you call the
 highest,
 But this I know, for all the people know it,
 He loves the Queen, and in an open shame
 And she returns his love in open shame,
 If this be high, what is it to be low?"

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat
 "Sweet father, all too fount and sick am I
 For anger these are slanders never yet
 Was noble man but made ignoble talk
 He makes no friend who never made a foe
 But now it is my glory to have loved
 One peerless, without stain so let me
 pass,

My father, howsoever I seem to you,
 Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
 And greatest, tho' my love had no return
 Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,
 Thanks, but you work against your own
 desire,

For if I could believe the things you say
 I should but die the sooner, wherefore
 care,

Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
 Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and
 die."

So when the ghostly man had come and
 gone,
 She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,
 Besought the priest to write as she desired
 A letter, word for word, and when he
 ask'd

"Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?"
 Then will I bear it gladly," she replied,
 "For Lancelot and the Queen and all the
 world,

But I myself must bear it." Then he wrote
 The letter she devised, which being writ
 And folded, "O sweet father, tender and
 true,

Deny me not," she said—"ye never yet
 Denied my fancies—thus, however strange,
 My latest lay the letter in my hand
 A little ere I die, and close the hand
 Upon it, I shall guard it even in death
 And when the heart is gone from out my
 heart,

Then take the little bed on which I died

For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the
Queen's

For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, clothed in black
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen
There surely I shall speak for mine own
self,

And none of you can speak for me so well
And therefore let our dumb old man alone
Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the
doors'

She ceased her father promised,
whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her
death

Was rather in the fantasy than the blood
But ten slow mornings past, and on the
eleventh

Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died
So that day there was dole in Astolat

But when the next sun broke from
underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent
brows

Accompanying, the sad chariot bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that
shone

Full-summer, to that stream whereon the
barge,

Pall'd all its length in blackest summe, lay
Theresat the lifeliong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, over her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to
her

'Sister, farewell for ever,' and again
'Farewell, sweet sister,' putted all in tears
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the
dead,

Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with
the flood—

In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming
down—

And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in
white

All but her face, and that clear featured
face

Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace
craved

Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Hard won and hardly won with bruise and
blow,

With deaths of others, and almost his
own,

The nine-years fought-for diamonds for
he saw

One of her house, and sent him to the
Queen

Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen
agreed

With such and so unmoved majesty
She might have seem'd her statue, but
that he,

Low drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her
feet

For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the
walls,

And parted, laughing in his courtly heart

All in an oriel on the summer side,
Vine clad, of Arthur's palace toward the
stream,

They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd,
'Queen,

Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
Take, what I had not won except for you,
These jewels, and make me happy, making
them

An amulet for the roundest arm on earth,
Or necklace for a neck to which the
swan's

Is tawnier than her cygnet's these are
words
Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it
Words, as we grant grief tears Such sin
in words
Perchance, we both can pardon but, my
Queen,
I hear of rumours flying thro' your court
Our bond, is not the bond of man and
wife,
Should have in it an absolute trust
To make up that defect let rumours be
When did not rumours fly? these, as I
trust
That you trust me in your own nobleness,
I may not well believe that you believe'

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away,
the Queen
Blake from the vast oval embowering vine
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them
off,
Till all the place whereon she stood was
green,
Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive
hand
Received at once and laid aside the gems
There on a table near her, and replied

'It may be, I am quicker of belief
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the
Lake
Our bond is not the bond of man and wife
This good is in it, whatsoever of ill,
It can be broken easier I for you
This many a year have done despite and
wrong
To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
I did acknowledge nobler What are
these?
Diamonds for me? they had been thine
their worth
Being your gift, had you not lost your
own
To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
Must vary as the giver's Not for me!
For her! for your new fancy Only this
Grant me, I pray you have your joys
apart

I doubt not that however changed, you
keep
So much of what is graceful and myself
Would shun to break those bounds of
cousinesy
In which as Arthur's Queen I move and
rule
So cannot speak my mind An end to
this!
A strange one! yet I take it with Amen
So play you, add my diamonds to her
pearls,
Deck her with these, tell her, she shines
me down
An amulet for an arm to which the
Queen's
Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck
O is much fairer—as a faith once fair
Was richer than these diamonds—heirs
not mine—
Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,
Or heirs or mine, mine now to work my
will—
She shall not have them'

Saying which she seized,
And, thro' the casement standing wide
for her,
Flung them, and down they flash'd, and
smote the stream
Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as
it were,
Diamonds to meet them, and they past
away
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half
disdain
At love, life, all things, on the window
ledge,
Close underneath his eyes, and right
across
Where these had fallen, slowly past the
barge
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst
away
To weep and wail in secret, and the
barge,
On to the palace doorway sliding, paused

There two stood aim'd, and kept the
door, to whom,
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes
that ask'd

'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard
face,

As hard and still as is the face that men
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken
rocks

On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and
they said,

'He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen,
so fair'

Yet, but how pale! what are they? flesh
and blood?

O! come to take the King to Fairyland?
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
But that he passes into Fairyland'

While thus they babbled of the King,
the King

Came girt with knights then turn'd the
tongueless man

From the half-face to the full eye, and
rose

And pointed to the damsel, and the doors
So Arthur bad the meek Sir Percivale
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the mud,
And reverently they bore her into hall
Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd
at her,

And Lancelot later came and mused at
her,

And last the Queen herself, and pitied
her

But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
Stooped, took, brake seal, and read it,
this was all

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the
Lake,

I, sometime call'd the mud of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Thither, to take my last farewell of you
I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my
death

And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,

And to all other ladies, I make moan
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless'

Thus he read,
And ever in the reading, lords and dames
Wept, looking often from his face who
read

To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
So touch'd were they, half thinking that
her lips,

Who had devised the letter, moved again

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them
all

'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that
hear,

Know that for this most gentle maiden's
death

Right heavy am I, for good she was and
true,

But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known
Yet to be loved makes not to love again,
Not at my years, however it hold in youth
I swear by truth and knighthood that I
gave

No cause, not willingly, for such a love
To this I call my friends in testimony,
Her brethren, and her father, who himself
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and
use,

To break her passion, some discourtesy
Against my nature what I could, I did
I left her and I bad her no farewell,
Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would
have died,

I might have put my wits to some rough
use,

And help'd her from herself'

Then said the Queen
(Sea was her wrath, yet working after
storm)

'Ye might at least have done her so
much grace,

For lord, as would have help'd her from
her death'

He rused his head, their eyes met and
hers full,

He adding,
 'Queen, she would not be content
 Save that I wedded her, which could not
 be
 Then might she follow me thro' the world,
 she ask'd,
 It could not be I told her that her love
 Was but the flash of youth, would darken
 down
 I to rise hereafter in a stiller flame
 Toward one more worthy of her—then
 would I,
 More specially were he, she wedded, poor,
 Estate them with large land and territory
 In mine own realm beyond the narrow
 seas,
 To keep them in all joyance more than
 this
 I could not, this she would not, and she
 died'

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, 'O my
 knight,
 It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
 And mine, as head of all our Fable Round,
 To see that she be buried worshipfully'

So toward that shrine which then in
 all the realm
 Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
 The marshall'd Order of their Table
 Round,

And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
 The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
 Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
 And mass, and rolling music, like a queen
 And when the knights had laid her comely
 head

Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
 Then Arthur spake among them, 'Let
 her tomb

Be costly, and her image thereupon,
 And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
 Be carved, and her lily in her hand
 And let the story of her dolorous voyage
 For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
 In letters gold and azure' which was
 wrought

Thereafter, but when now the lords and
 dames

And people, from the high door stream
 ing, brake
 Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
 Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved
 apart,
 DREW near, and sigh'd in passing,
 'Lancelot,
 Forgive me, mine was jealousy in love'
 He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
 'That is love's curse, pass on, my Queen,
 forgiven'
 But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
 Approach'd him, and with full affection
 said,

'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom
 I have
 Most joy and most reliance, for I know
 What thou hast been in battle by my side,
 And many a time have watch'd thee at
 the tilt

Strike down the lusty and long practised
 knight,

And let the younger and unskill'd go by
 To win his honour and to make his name,
 And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
 Made to be loved, but now I would to
 God,

Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
 Thou couldst have loved this maiden,
 shap'd, it seems,

By God for thee alone, and from her face,
 If one may judge the living by the dead,
 Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
 Who might have brought thee, now a
 lonely man

Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
 Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
 My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the
 Lake'

Then answer'd Lancelot, 'Fain she was,
 my King,
 Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be
 To doubt her fineness were to want an eye,
 To doubt her pureness were to want a
 heart—

Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
 Could bind him, but false love will not be
 bound'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said
the King
'Let love be free, free love is for the
best
And, after heaven, on our dull side of
death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She ful'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but
he went,
And at the running of a little brook
Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
And saw the barge that brought her
moving down,
Far off, a blot upon the stream, and said
Low in himself, 'Ah simple heart and
sweet,
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
Far tender than my Queen's. Pray for
thy soul'

Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at
last—
Farewell, fair lady. "Jealousy in love?"
Not rather do I love's harsh hen, jealous
proud?

Queen, if I grant the jealousy is of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and
fame
Spark, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
Why did the King dwell on my name to
me?

Mine own name shames me, seeming a
reproach,
I Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Caught from his mother's arms—the
wondrous one

Who passes thro' the vision of the night—
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
Held on the winding waters, o'er and
moor

She kiss'd me saying, "Thou art fair,
my child,
As a king's son," and often in her arms
She bore me, pacing on the dusky moor
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er
it be!

For what am I? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and
have it

Pleasure to have it, none, to lose it, pain,
Now grown a part of me but what use in
it?

To make men wiser by making my sin
known?

O! sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must
break

These bonds that so defame me not
without

She wills it would I, if she will'd it? nay,
Who knows? but if I would not, then
may God,

I pray him, send a sudden Angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten
mere,

Among the tumbled fragments of the
hills?

So grown'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful
pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man

THE HOLY GRAIL

FROM noiseful aims, and acts of prowess
done

In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd
the Pure,

Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms, and leaving for
the cowl

The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after,
died

And one, a fellow monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the
rest,

And honour'd him, and wrought into his
heart

A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came and as they
sat

Beneath a world old yew tree, darkening
half

The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into
smoke

Above them, ere the summer when he
died,

The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale

'O brother, I have seen this yew tree
smoke,

Spring after spring, for half a hundred
years

For never have I known the world with
out,

Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale but
thee,

When first thou camest—such a courtesy
Spake tho' the limbs and in the voice—
I knew

For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall,
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but everyone of you
Stamp'd with the image of the King, and
now

Tell me, what drove thee from the Table
Round,

My brother? was it earthly passion crost?'

'Nay,' said the knight, 'for no such
passion mine

But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle
out

Among us in the jousts, while women
watch

Who wins, who falls, and waste the
spiritual strength

Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven'

To whom the monk 'The Holy
Grail'—I trust

We are green in Heaven's eyes, but here
too much

We moulder—as to things without I
mean—

Yet one of your own knights, a guest of
ours,

Told us of this in our refectory,

But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said What
is it?

The phantom of a cup that comes and
goes?'

'Nay, monk! what phantom?' answer'd
Percivale

'The cup, the cup itself, from which our
Lord

Drank at the last sad supper with his
own

This, from the blessed land of Aumat—
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good
saint

Aumathean Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our
Lord

And there awhile it bode, and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at
once,

By faith, of all his ills But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven, and dis-
appear'd'

To whom the monk 'From our old
books I know

That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to
build,

And there he built with wattles from the
marsh

A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but
seem

Mute of this miracle, far as I have read
But who first saw the holy thing to day?'

'A woman,' answer'd Percivale, 'a
nun,

And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister, and if ever holy maid
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid, tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human
love,

Which being rudely blunted, glanced and
shot

Only to holy things, to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms And
yet,

Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous
race,

Across the iron grating of her cell
Bent, and she pray'd and fasted all the
more

'And he to whom she told her sins, or
what

Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time And when King
Arthur made

His Table Round, and all men's hearts
became

Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come
again,

But sin broke out Ah, Christ, that it
would come,
And heal the world of all their wickedness!

"O Father!" ask'd the maiden, "might
it come

To me by prayer and fasting?" "Nay,"
said he,

"I know not, for thy heart is pure as
snow"

And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and
I thought

She might have risen and floated when I
saw her

'For on a day she sent to speak with
me

And when she came to speak, behold her
eyes

Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness

And "O my brother Percivale," she said,

"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy
Grail

For, waked at dead of night, I heard a
sound

As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's
use

To hunt by moonlight,' and the slender
sound

As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch
with hand,

Was like that music as it came, and then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver
beam,

And down the long beam stole the Holy
Grail,

Rose red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were
died

With rosy colours leaping on the wall,
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the
walls

The rosy quiverings died into the night
So now the Holy Thing is here again

Among us, brother, fast thou too and
pray,

And tell thy brother knights to fast and
pray,

That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be
heal'd"

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake
of this

To all men, and myself fasted and
pray'd

Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be

'And one there was among us, ever
moved

Among us in white armour, Gralhbad
"God make thee good as thou art beau-
tiful,"

Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight,
and none,

In so young youth, was ever made a knight
Till Galahad, and this Galahad, when
he heard
My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze,
His eyes became so like her own, they
seem'd
Heis, and himself her brother more than I

'Sister or brother none had he, but
some
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some
said
Begotten by enchantment—chatteris
they,
Like buds of passage piping up and down,
That gape for flus—we know not whence
they come,
For when was Lancelot wanderingly
lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore
away
Clean from her forehead all that wealth
of hair
Which made a silken mat work for her
feet,
And out of this she plaited broad and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver
thread
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beun,
And saw the bright boy-knight, and
bound it on him,
Saying, "My knight, my love, my knight
of heaven,
O thou, my love, whose love is one with
mine,
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my
belt
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have
seen,
And break thro' all, till one will crown
thee king
Far in the spiritual city" and as she
spake
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid
her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief

'Then came a year of miracle O
brother,
In our great hall there stood a vacant
chair,
Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures, and in
and out
The figures, like a serpent, run a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read
And Merlin call'd it "The Siege peril
ous,"
Perilous for good and ill, "for that,"
he said,
"No man could sit but he should lose
himself"
And once by misadventure Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost, but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

'Then on a summer night it came to
pass,
While the great banquet lay along the
hall,
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's
chair

'And all at once, as there we sat, we
heard
A cracking and a riving of the roof,
And rending, and a blast, and overheard
thunder, and in the thunder was a cry
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear
than day
And down the long beam stole the Holy
Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it
past
But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights rose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and swam a
vow

'I swore a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would
ride
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun

My sister saw it, and Galahad swaie the
vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin,
swaie,
And Lancelot swaie, and many among
the knights,
And Gawain swaie, and louder than the
rest'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, ask-
ing him,
'What said the King? Did Arthur take
the vow?'

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale,
'the King,
Was not in hall for early that same day,
Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit hold,
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
Crying on help for all her slurring hair
Was smear'd with earth, and ether milky
aim
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all
she wore

Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
In tempest so the King arose and went
To smoke the scandalous hive of those
wild bees

That made such honey in his realm
Howbeit

Some little of this marvel he too saw,
Returning o'er the plain that then began
To darken under Camelot, whence the
King

Look'd up, calling aloud, "Lo, there'
the roofs

Of our great hall are roll'd in thunder
smoke'

Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the
bolt"

For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the stateliest under
heaven

'O brother, had you known our mighty
hall,

Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago'
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,

By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing
brook,

Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin
built

And four great zones of sculpture, set
betwixt

With many a mystic symbol, guard the hall
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing
wings,

And over all one statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern
Star

And eastward fronts the statue, and the
crown

And both the wings are made of gold,
and flame

At sunrise till the people in fair fields,
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
Behold it, crying, "We have still a King"

'And, brother, had you known our hall
within,

Broader and higher than any in all the
lands'

Where twelve great windows blazon
Arthur's wars,

And all the light that falls upon the board
Streams thro' the twelve great battles of
our King

Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount
and mere,

Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur
And also one to the west, and counter to it,
And blank and who shall blazon it?
when and how?—

O there, perchance, when all our wars are
done,

The brand Excalibur will be cast away

'So to this hall full quickly rode the
King,

In honor lest the work by Merlin wrought,
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish,
wreapt

In unembraceful folds of rolling fire

And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw
The golden dragon sparkling over all
And many of those who burnt the hold,
their arms

Hack'd, and their foreheads gumed with
smoke, and sear'd,

Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,
Full of the vision, prest and then the
King

Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale,"
(Because the hall was all in tumult—some
Vowing, and some protesting), "what is
this?"

"O brother, when I told him what had
chanced,

My sister's vision, and the rest, his face
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than
once,

When some brave deed seem'd to be done
in vain,

Darken, and "Woe is me, my knights,"
he cried,

"Had I been here, ye had not sworn
the vow"

Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself
been here,

My King, thou wouldst have sworn"
"Yea, yea," said he,

"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the
Grail?"

"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I
saw the light,
But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
I swear a vow to follow it till I saw"

"Then when he ask'd us, knight by
knight, if any
Had seen it, all their answers were as
one

"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn
our vows"

"Lo now," said Arthur, "have ye
seen a cloud?"
What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

"Then Galahad on the sudden, and in
a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,

"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me'"

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the
King, "for such

As thou art is the vision, not for these
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Hoher is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made
But ye, that follow but the leader's bell"
(Brother, the King was laid upon his
knights)

"Talcassin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will
sing

Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overcome
Five knights at once, and every younger
knight,

Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overcome by one, he learns—and ye,
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Per-
civales"

(For thus it pleased the King to range
me close

After Sir Galahad), "nay," said he,
"but men

With strength and will to right the
wrong'd, of power

To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles
splash'd and dy'd

The strong White Horse in his own
heaven blood—

But one hath seen, and all the blind will
see

Go, since your vows are sacred, being
made

Yet—for ye know the cries of all my
realm

Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my
knights,

Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come
and go

Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering
fires

Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, ye
most,

Return no more ye think I show myself

Too dark a prophet come now, let us
meet
The morrow morn once more in one full
field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the
King,
Before ye leave him for this Quest, may
count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his
knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made "

' So when the sun broke next from
under ground,
All the great table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken—never yet
Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur
came ,
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their
heat,
Shouting, " Sir Galahad and Sir Perci-
vale ! "

' But when the next day broke from
under ground—
O brother, had you known our Camelot,
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had fears that it would
fall,
So strange, and rich, and dim, for where
the roofs
Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass, and lower, and
where the long
Rich galleries, lady loden, weigh'd the
necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers
of flowers
Fell as we past, and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, nam'd us each by
name,
Calling " God speed ! " but in the ways
below

The knights and ladies wept, and rich
and poor
Wept, and the King himself could hardly
speak
For grief, and all in middle street the
Queen,
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd
aloud,
" This madness has come on us for our
sins "
So to the Gate of the three Queens we
came,
Where Arthur's ways are render'd mys-
tically,
And thence departed every one his way

' And I was lifted up in heart, and
thought
Of all my late shown prowess in the lists,
How my strong lance had beaten down
the knights,
So many and famous names, and never
yet
Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth
so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I
knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail

' Thereafter, the dark warning of our
King,
That most of us would follow wandering
fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my
mind
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of
old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, " This Quest is not for
thee "
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death,
And I, too, cried, " This Quest is not for
thee "

' And on I rode, and when I thought
my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then
a brook,

With one sharp rapid, where the crisping
white

Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye, and o'er the
brook

Were apple trees, and apples by the brook.
Fallen, and on the lawns "I will rest
here,"

I said, "I am not worthy of the Quest,"
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns

'And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning, and fan the house whereby she
sat,

And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious, and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who
should say,

"Rest here," but when I touch'd her,
lo' she, too,

Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed
And in it a dead babe, and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone

'And on I rode, and greater was my
thirst

Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the
world,

And where it smote the plowshare in the
field,

The plowman left his plowing, and fell
down

Before it, where it glitter'd on her paul,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell
down

Before it, and I knew not why, but
thought

"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armour with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels, and his horse
In golden armour jewell'd everywhere
And on the splendour came, flashing me
blind,

And seem'd to me the Lord of all the
world,

Being so huge But when I thought he
meant

To crush me, moving on me, lo' he, too,
Open'd his arms to embrace me as he
came,

And up I went and touch'd him, and he,
too,

Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And weeping in a land of sand and
thorns

'And I rode on and found a mighty
hill,

And on the top, a city wall'd the spires
Pick'd with incredible pinnacles into
heaven

And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd, and
these

Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Perci-
vale'

Thou mightiest and thou purest among
men'

And glad was I and clomb, but found at
top

No man, nor any voice And thence I
past

For thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there, but
there I found

Only one man of an exceeding age

"What is that goodly company," said I,
"That so cried out upon me?" and he
had

Scarce any voice to answer, and yet
gasp'd,

"Whence and what art thou?" and even
as he spoke

Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I
Was left alone once more, and cried in
grief,

"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust "

'And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the
vale

Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he
said

"O son, thou hast not true humility,
 The highest virtue, mother of them all,
 For when the Lord of all things made
 Himself
 Naked of glory for His mortal change,
 'Take thou my robe,' she said, 'for all
 is thine,'
 And all her form shone forth with sudden
 light
 So that the angels were amazed, and she
 Follow'd Him down, and like a flying
 star
 Led on the gray-hau'd wisdom of the east,
 But her thou hast not known for what
 is this
 Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy
 sins?
 Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
 As Galahad." When the hermit made
 an end,
 In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone
 Before us, and against the chapel door
 Loud lance, and enter'd, and we knelt in
 prayer
 And there the hermit slaked my burning
 thirst,
 And at the raising of the mass I saw
 The holy elements alone, but he,
 "Is raw ye no more?" I, Galahad, saw
 the Grail,
 The Holy Grail, descend upon the
 shrine
 I saw the fiery face as of a child
 That smote itself into the bread, and went,
 And hither am I come, and never yet
 Hath what thy sister taught me first to
 see,
 This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side, nor
 come
 Cover'd, but moving with me night and
 day,
 Fainter by day, but always in the night
 Blood red, and sliding down the blacken'd
 marsh
 Blood red, and on the naked mountain
 top
 Blood-red, and in the sleeping mole below
 Blood-red. And in the strength of this
 I rode,
 Shattering all evil customs every where,

And past thro' Pagan realms, and made
 them mine,
 And clash'd with Pagan hoides, and bore
 them down,
 And broke thro' all, and in the strength
 of this
 Come victor. But my time is hard at
 hand,
 And hence I go, and one will crown me
 king
 Fair in the spiritual city, and come thou,
 too,
 For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

'While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling
 on mine,
 Drew me, with power upon me, till I
 grew
 One with him, to believe as he believed
 Then, when the day began to wane, we
 went

'There rose a hill that none but man
 could climb,
 Scarr'd with a hundred wintry water-
 courses—
 Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it,
 storm
 Round us and death, for every moment
 glanced
 His silver arms and gloom'd so quick
 and thick
 The lightnings here and there to left and
 right
 Struck, till the dry old trunks about us,
 dead,
 Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
 Sprang into fire and at the base we found
 On either hand, as far as eye could see,
 A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
 Put black, put whiten'd with the bones
 of men,
 Not to be cross, save that some ancient
 king
 Had built a way, where, link'd with
 many a bridge,
 A thousand piers ran into the great Sea
 And Galahad fled along them bridge by
 bridge,
 And every bridge as quickly as he cross'd

Spiang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I
yeain'd

To follow, and thence above him all the
heavens

Open'd and blazed with thunder such as
seem'd

Shoutings of all the sons of God and first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver shining armour starray-clear,
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
If boat it were—I saw not whence it came
And when the heavens open'd and blazed
again

Roaring, I saw him like a silver stai—
And hrd he set the sail, or hrd the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been with
dawn

Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond
the star

I saw the spiritual city and all her spurs
And gateways in a glory like one peril—
No larger, tho' the goal of all the suns—
Strike from the sea, and from the str
there shot

A rose red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning
the deep

And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge
No memory in me lives, but that I touch'd
The chapel-doors at dawn I know, and
thence

Taking my way hiose from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vex'd me more,
return'd

To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's
wars'

'O brother,' ask'd Ambrosius,—'for
in sooth

These ancient books—and they would win
thee—teem,

Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
With miracles and marvels like to these,
Not all unlike, which oftentime I read,
Who read but on my breviary with ease,
Till my head swims, and then go forth
and pass

Down to the little thorp that lies so close,
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest
To these old walls—and mingle with our
folk,

And knowing every honest face of thens
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
And every homely secret in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
And ills and aches, and teetings, lyings
in,

And mirthful sayings, children of the place,
That have no meaning half a league away
Or lulling random squabbles when they
rise,

Chaffings and chatterings at the market-
cross,

Rejoice, small man, in this small world
of mine,

Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,
Came ye on none but phantoms in your
quest,

No man, no woman?

Then Sir Percivale

'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
And women were as phantoms O, my
brother,

Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
How far I falter'd from my quest and vow?

For after I had lain so many nights,
A bedmate of the snail and eel and snake,
In grass and buidock, I was changed to
wan

And meagre, and the vision had not
come,

And then I chanced upon a goodly town
With one great dwelling in the middle
of it,

Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd
By maidens each as fair as any flower
But when they led me into hall, behold,
The Princess of that castle was the one,
Brother, and that one only, who had ever

Made my heart leap, for when I moved
of old

A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing yet we
twain

Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow
And now I came upon her once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state
were hers

And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me, for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old, till one fair
morn,

I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across her orchard underneath
Her castle walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first
time,

And gave herself and all her wealth to me
Then I remember'd Arthur's warning
word,

That most of us would follow wandering
fics,

And the Quest faded in my heart Anon,
The herds of all her people drew to me,
With supplication both of knees and
tongue

"We have heard of thee thou art our
greatest knight,

Our Lady says it, and we well believe
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land "

O me, my brother! but one night my vow
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own
self,

And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her,

Then after I was join'd with Gralahad
Cared not for her, nor anything upon
earth "

Then said the monk, ' Poor men, when
yule is cold,
Must be content to sit by little fires
And thus am I, so that ye care for me
Ever so little, yet, and blest be Heaven

That brought thee here to this poor house
of ours

Where all the brethren are so hard, to
waim

My cold heart with a friend but O the
pity

To find thine own first love once more—
to hold,

Hold her a wealthy bride within thine
arms,

Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed
For we that want the warmth of double
life,

We that are plagued with dreams of
something sweet

Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise,
Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite
All fast and penance Saw ye none be
side,

None of your knights "

' Yea so,' said Percivale

' One night my pathway swerving east, I
saw

The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bois
All in the middle of the rising moon

And toward him spurr'd, and hail'd him,
and he me,

And each made joy of either, then he
ask'd,

"Where is he? hast thou seen him—
Lancelot?—Once,"

Said good Sir Bois, " he dash'd across me
—mad,

And maddening what he rode and when
I cried,

' Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy,' Lancelot shouted, ' Stay me not '
I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the way '
So vanish'd "

' Then Sir Bois had ridden on
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness, once the talk
And scandal of our table, had return'd,

For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship
him

That ill to him is ill to them, to Bois
Beyond the rest he well had been content
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have
seen,

The Holy Cup of healing, and, indeed,
Being so clouded with his grief and love,
Small heart was his after the Holy Quest
If God would send the vision, well if not,
The Quest and he were in the hands of
Heaven

'And then, with small adventure met,
Sir Bois

Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,
And found a people there among their
craggs,

Our race and blood, a remnant that were
left

Paynim amid their circles, and the stones
They pitch up straight to heaven and
their wise men

Were strong in that old magic which can
trace

The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at
him

And this high Quest is at a simple thing
Told him he follow'd—almost Arthur's
words—

A mocking fire "what other fire than
he,

Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom
blows,

And the sea rolls, and all the world is
warm'd?"

And when his answer chafed them, the
rough crowd,

Hearing he had a difference with their
priests,

Seized him, and bound and plunged him
into a cell

Of great piled stones, and lying bounden
there

In darkness thio' innumerable hours

He heard the hollow-ringing heavens
sweep

Over him till by miracle—what else?—
Heavy as it was, a great stone slept and
fell,

Such as no wind could move and thio'
the gap

Glimmer'd the streaming scud then
came a night

Still as the day was loud, and thio' the
gap

The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table
Round—

For, brother, so one night, because they
roll

Thio' such a round in heaven, we named
the stars,

Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King—
And these, like bright eyes of familiar
friends,

In on him shone "And then to me, to
me,"

Said good Sir Bors, "beyond all hopes
of mine,

Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for
myself—

Across the seven clear stars—O grace to
me—

In colour like the fingers of a hand
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
Glided and past, and close upon it pearl'd
A sharp quick thunder "Afterwards, a
mud,

Who kept our holy faith among her kin
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go'

To whom the monk "And I remember
now

That pelican on the crosque Sir Bors it
was

Who spake so low and sadly at our board,
And mighty reverent at our grace when he

A square set man and honest, and his
eyes,

An out door sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a
cloud,

But heaven had meant it for a sunny one
Ay, ay, Sir Bois, who else? But when

ye reach'd

The city, found ye all your knights re-
turn'd,

O! was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,
Tell me, and what said each, and what
the King?"

Then answer'd Peircivale 'And that
can I,
Brother, and truly, since the living words
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
Pass not from door to door and out again,
But sit within the house O, when we
reach'd
The city, our horses stumbling as they
trode
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cocka-
trices,
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the
stones
Raw, that they fell from, brought us to
the hall

'And there sat Arthur on the dais
throne,
And those that had gone out upon the
Quest,
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of
them,
And those that had not, stood before the
King,
Who, when he saw me, rose, and bid
me hail,
Saying, "A wolf in thine eye reproves
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
Among the strange devices of our kings,
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of
ours,
And from the statue Merlin moulded for
us
Half wrench'd a golden wing, but now—
the Quest,
This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
That Joseph brought of old to Glaston-
bury?"

'So when I told him all thyself hast
heard,
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
To pass away into the quiet life,
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning,
ask'd
Of Gawain, "Gawain, was this Quest for
thee?"

"Nay, lord," said Gawain, "not for
such as I
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the Quest was not
for me,
For I was much aweared of the Quest
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it, and then this
gale
Took my pavilion from the tenting pin,
And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort, yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant
to me"

'He ceased, and Arthur turn'd to
whom at first
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering,
push'd
Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught
his hand,
Held it, and there, half-hidden by him,
stood,
Until the King espied him, saying to him,
"Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail,"
and Bors,
"Ask me not, for I may not speak of it
I saw it," and the tears were in his eyes

'Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for
the rest
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm,
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last,
"Thou, too, my Lancelot," ask'd the
King, "my friend,
Oui mightiest, hath this Quest avail'd for
thee?"

"Our mightiest!" answer'd Lancelot,
with a groan,
"O King!"—and when he paused,
methought I spied
A dying fire of madness in his eyes—
"O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for
slime,
Slime of the ditch but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pain,

Noble, and knightly in me twined and
 clung
 Round that one sin, until the wholesome
 flower
 And poisonous grew together, each as
 each,
 Not to be pluck'd asunder, and when thy
 knights
 Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
 That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
 They might be pluck'd asunder Then I
 spake
 To one most holy saint, who wept and
 said,
 That save they could be pluck'd asunder,
 all
 My quest were but in vain, to whom I
 vow'd
 That I would work according as he will'd
 And forth I went, and while I yearn'd
 and strove
 To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
 My madness came upon me as of old,
 And whipt me into waste fields far away,
 There was I beaten down by little men,
 Mean knights, to whom the moving of
 my sword
 And shadow of my spear had been enow
 To scare them from me once, and then
 I came
 All in my folly to the naked shore,
 Wide flats, where nothing but coarse
 grasses grew,
 But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
 So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
 Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
 Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the
 sea
 Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
 Swept like a river, and the clouded
 heavens
 Were shaken with the motion and the
 sound
 And blackening in the sea foam sway'd a
 boat,
 Half swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a
 chain,
 And in my madness to myself I said,
 'I will embark and I will lose myself,
 And in the great sea wash away my sin'

I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat
 Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
 And with me drove the moon and all the
 stars,
 And the wind fell, and on the seventh
 night
 I heard the shingle grunding in the surge,
 And felt the boat shock earth, and looking
 up,
 Behold, the enchanted towers of Car
 bonek,
 A castle like a rock upon a rock,
 With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
 And steps that met the breaker ' there
 was none
 Stood near it but a lion on each side
 That kept the entry, and the moon was
 full
 Then from the boat I leapt, and up the
 stairs
 There drew my sword With sudden-
 flaring manes
 Those two great beasts rose upright like
 a man,
 Each gript a shoulder, and I stood
 between,
 And, when I would have smitten them,
 heard a voice,
 'Doubt not, go forward, if thou doubt,
 the beasts
 Will tear thee piecemeal' Then with
 violence
 The sword was dash'd from out my hand,
 and fell
 And up into the sounding hall I past,
 But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
 No bench nor table, painting on the wall
 Or shield of knight, only the rounded
 moon
 Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea
 But always in the quiet house I heard,
 Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
 A sweet voice singing in the topmost
 tower
 To the eastward up I climb'd a thousand
 steps
 With pain as in a dream I seem'd to
 climb
 For ever at the last I reach'd a door,
 A light was in the ciannies, and I heard,

'Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail'
Then in my madness I essay'd the door,
It gave, and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd
away—

O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings
and eyes

And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I
saw

That which I saw, but what I saw was
veil'd

And cover'd, and this Quest was not for
me "

'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left

The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain—nay,
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish
words,—

A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
Now bolden'd by the silence of his
king,—

Well, I will tell thee "O King, my
liege," he said,

"Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of
thine ?

When have I stinted stroke in foughten
field ?

But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men
mad,

Yea, made our mightiest madder than
our least

But by mine eyes and by mine ears I
sweat,

I will be deafen'd than the blue eyed cat,
And thence is blind as any noonday owl,
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
Henceforward "

"Deafest," said the blameless King,
"Gawain, and blinder unto holy things
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desire to see

But if indeed there came a sign from
heaven,

Blessed are Bois, Lancelot and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their
sight

For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could
but speak

His music by the framework and the
choird,

And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth

"Nay—but thou errest, Lancelot
never yet

Could all of true and noble in knight and
man

Twine round one sin, whatever it might
be,

With such a closeness, but apart there
grew,

Save that he were the swine thou spakest
of,

Some root of knighthood and pure noble-
ness,

Whereto see thou, that it may bear its
flower

"And spake I not too truly, O my
knights ?

Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wan-
dering fires,

Lost in the quagmire ?—lost to me and
gone,

And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Order—scarce return'd a
tithe—

And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw,
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right them
selves,

Cares but to pass into the silent life
And one hath had the vision face to
face,

And now his chan desires him here in
vain,

However they may crown him elsewhere

"And some among you held, that if
 the King
 Had seen the sight he would have sworn
 the vow
 Not easily, seeing that the King must
 guard
 That which he rules, and is but as the hind
 To whom a space of land is given to
 plow
 Who may not wander from the allotted
 field
 Before his work be done, but, being done,
 Let visions of the night or of the day
 Come, as they will, and many a time
 they come,
 Until this earth he walks on seems not
 earth,
 This light that strikes his eyeball is not
 light,
 This air that smites his forehead is not air
 But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—
 In moments when he feels he cannot die,
 And knows himself no vision to himself,
 Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
 Who rose again ye have seen what ye
 have seen "

'So spake the King I knew not all
 he meant '

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE

KING ARTHUR made new knights to fill
 the gap
 Left by the Holy Quest, and as he sat
 In hall at old Caerleon, the high doors
 Were softly sunder'd, and thro' these a
 youth,
 Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields
 Past, and the sunshine came along with
 him

'Make me thy knight, because I know,
 Sir King,
 All that belongs to knighthood, and I love '
 Such was his cry for having heard the
 King
 Had let proclaim a tournament—the prize
 A golden circlet and a knightly sword,
 Full fain had Pelleas for his lady won

The golden circlet, for himself the sword
 And there were those who knew him near
 the King,
 And promised for him and Arthur made
 him knight

And this new knight, Sir Pellers of the
 isles—

But lately come to his inheritance,
 And lord of many a barren isle was he—
 Riding at noon, a day or twain before,
 Across the forest call'd of Dorn, to find
 Creiklon and the King, had felt the sun
 Beat like a strong knight on his helm,
 and reclin'd

Almost to falling from his horse, but
 saw

Near him a mound of even sloping side,
 Whereon a hundred stately beeches grew,
 And here and there great hollies under
 them,

But for a mile all round was open space,
 And fern and heath and slowly Pelleas
 drew

To that dim day, then binding his good
 horse

To a tice, cast himself down, and as he
 lay

At random looking over the brown earth
 Thro' that green glooming twilight of the
 grove,

It seem'd to Pellers that the fern without
 Burnt as a living fire of emeralds,
 So that his eyes were dazzled looking at it
 Then o'er it cross'd the dimness of a cloud
 Floating, and once the shadow of a bird
 Flying, and then a fawn, and his eyes
 closed

And since he loved all maidens, but no
 maid

In special, half awake he whisper'd,
 'Where?'

O where? I love thee, tho' I know thee
 not

For fain thou art and pure as Guinevere,
 And I will make thee with my spear and
 sword

As famous—O my Queen, my Guinevere,
 For I will be thine Arthur when we
 meet '

Suddenly waken'd with a sound of talk
And laughter at the limit of the wood,
And glancing thro' the hoary boles, he saw,
Strange as to some old prophet might
have seem'd

A vision hovering on a sea of fire,
Damsels in divers colours like the cloud
Of sunset and sunrise, and all of them
On horses, and the horses richly trapt
Burst high in that bright line of blacken
stood

And all the damsels talk'd confusedly,
And one was pointing this way, and one
that,
Because the way was lost

And Pelleas rose,
And loosed his horse, and led him to the
light
There she that seem'd the chief among
them said,
'In happy time behold our pilot stay!
Youth, we are damsels-errant, and we ride,
Arm'd as ye see, to tilt against the knights
There at Caerleon, but have lost our way
To right? to left? straight forward? back
again?
Which? tell us quickly!'

And Pelleas gazing thought,
'Is Guinevere herself so beautiful?'
For large her violet eyes look'd, and her
bloom
A rosy dawn kindled in stainless heavens,
And round her limbs, mature in woman
hood,
And slender was her hand and small her
shape,
And but for those large eyes, the haunts
of scorn,
She might have seem'd a toy to tattle with,
And pass and care no more. But while
he gazed
The beauty of her flesh abash'd the boy,
As tho' it were the beauty of her soul
For as the base man, judging of the good,
Puts his own baseness in him by default
Of will and nature, so did Pelleas lend
All the young beauty of his own soul to
hers,

Believing her, and when she spake to
him,
Stammer'd, and could not make her a
reply

For out of the waste islands had he come,
Where saving his own sisters he had known
Scarcely any but the women of his isles,
Rough wives, that laugh'd and scream'd
against the gulls,
Makers of nets, and living from the sea

Then with a slow smile turn'd the lady
round
And look'd upon her people, and as when
A stone is flung into some sleeping tarn,
The circle widens till it lip the marge,
Spread the slow smile thro' all her com-
pany
Three knights were thereamong, and they
too smiled,
Scorning him, for the lady was Ettarre,
And she was a great lady in her land

Again she said, 'O wild and of the
woods,
Knowest thou not the fashion of our
speech?
Or have the Heavens but given thee a fair
face,
Lacking a tongue?'

'O damsel,' answer'd he,
'I woke from dreams, and coming out
of gloom
Was dazzled by the sudden light, and
crave
Pardon but will ye to Caerleon? I
Go likewise shall I lead you to the King?'

'Lead then,' she said, and thro' the
woods they went
And while they rode, the meaning in his
eyes,
His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,
His broken utterances and bashfulness,
Were all a burthen to her, and in her
heart
She mutter'd, 'I have lighted on a fool,
Raw, yet so stile!' But since her mind
was bent
On hearing, after trumpet blown, her name

And title, 'Queen of Beauty,' in the lists
Cried—and beholding him so strong, she
thought

That peradventure he will fight for me,
And win the circlet therefore flatter'd
him,

Being so gracious, that he wellnigh deem'd
His wish by hers was echo'd, and her
knights

And all her damsels too were gracious to
him,

For she was a great lady

And when they reach'd
Caeleon, ere they past to lodging, she,
Taking his hand, 'O the strong hand,'
she said,

'See ' look at mine ' but wilt thou fight
for me,

And win me this fine circlet, Pelleas,
That I may love thee''

Then his helpless heart
Leapt, and he cried, 'Ay ' wilt thou if I
win ?'

'Ay, that will I,' she answer'd, and she
laugh'd,

And straitly nipt the hand, and flung it
from her ,

Then glanced askew at those three knights
of hers,

Till all her ladies laugh'd along with her

'O happy world,' thought Pelleas, 'all,
meseems,

Are happy , I the happiest of them all '
Nor slept that night for pleasure in his
blood,

And green wood-ways, and eyes among
the leaves ,

Then being on the morrow knighted,
sware

To love one only And as he came away,
The men who met him rounded on their
heels

And wonder'd after him, because his face
Shone like the countenance of a priest of
old

Against the flame about a sacrifice
Kindled by fire from heaven so glad
was he

Then Aithur made vast banquets, and
strange knights

From the four winds came in and each
one sat,

Tho' served with choice from air, land,
stream, and sea,

Oft in mid banquet measuring with his
eyes

His neighbours make and might and
Pelleas look'd

Noble among the noble, for he dream'd
His lady loved him, and he knew himself

Loved of the King and him his new-
made knight

Woishipt, whose lightest whisper moved
him more

Than all the ranged reasons of the world

Then blush'd and brake the morning
of the jousts,

And this was call'd 'The Tournament of
Youth '

For Aithur, loving his young knight,
withheld

His older and his mightier from the lists,
That Pelleas might obtain his lady's love,

According to her promise, and remain
Lord of the tourney And Aithur had

the jousts

Down in the flat field by the shore of Usk
Held the gilded parapets were crown'd

With faces, and the great tower fill'd with
eyes

Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew
There all day long Sir Pelleas kept the
field

With honour so by that strong hand of
his

The sword and golden circlet were
achieved

Then rang the shout his lady loved
the heart

Of pride and glory fired her face , her eye
Sparkled , she caught the circlet from his

lance,
And there before the people crown'd
herself

So for the last time she was gracious to
him

Then at Cærlleon for a space—her look
Bright for all others, cloudier on her
knight—
Linger'd Ettarre and seeing Pelleas
droop,
Said Guinevere, 'We marvel at thee
much,
O damsel, wearing this unsunny face
To him who won thee glory ' ' And she
said,
'Had ye not held your Lancelot in your
bowel,
My Queen, he had not won ' Whereat
the Queen,
As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,
Glanced down upon her, turn'd and went
her way

But afeir, when her damsels, and hei-
self,
And those three knights all set their
faces home,
Sir Pelleas follow'd She that saw him
cried,
'Damsels—and yet I should be shamed
to say it—
I cannot bide Sir Bisy Keep him back
Among yourselves Would rather that
we had
Some tough old knight who knew the
worldly way,
Albeit grizzlier than a bear, to ride
And jest with take him to you, keep
him off,
And pamper him with papmeat, if ye will,
Old milky fables of the wolf and sheep,
Such as the wholesome mothers tell their
boys
Nay, should ye try him with a merry one
To find his mettle, good and if he fly
us,
Small matter ' let him ' This her
damsels heard,
And mindful of her small and cruel hand,
They, closing round him thro' the journey
home,
Acted her best, and always from her side
Restrain'd him with all manner of device,
So that he could not come to speech
with her

And when she gain'd her castle, upsprang
the budge,
Down rang the gate of iron thro' the
groove,
And he was left alone in open field

'These be the ways of ladies,' Pelleas
thought,
'To those who love them, trials of our
faith
Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,
For loyal to the uttermost am I '
So made his moan, and, darkness falling,
sought
A priory not far off, there lodged, but
rose
With morning every day, and, moist or
dry,
Full aim'd upon his charger all day long
Sat by the walls, and no one open'd to
him

And this persistence turn'd her scorn
to wrath
Then calling her three knights, she
charged them, 'Out '
And drove him from the walls ' And out
they came,
But Pelleas overthrew them as they
dash'd
Against him one by one, and these
return'd,
But still he kept his watch beneath the
wall

Thereon her wrath became a hate,
and once,
A week beyond, while walking on the
walls
With her three knights, she pointed
downward, 'Look,
He haunts me—I cannot breathe—the
sieges me,
Down ' strike him ' put my hate into
your strokes,
And drive him from my walls ' And
down they went,
And Pelleas overthrew them one by one,
And from the tower above him cried
Ettarre,
'Bind him, and bring him in '

He heard her voice,
Then let the strong hand, which had
overthrown
Her minion knights, by those he over-
threw
Be bounden straight, and so they brought
him in

Then when he came before Ettarre,
the sight
Of her rich beauty made him at one
glance
More bondsman in his heart than in his
bonds
Yet with good cheer he spake, 'Behold
me, Lady,
A prisoner, and the vassal of thy will,
And if thou keep me in thy donjon here,
Content am I so that I see thy face
But once a day for I have sworn my
vows,
And thou hast given thy promise, and I
know
That all these pains and trials of my faith,
And that thyself, when thou hast seen me
strained
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length
Yield me thy love and know me for thy
knight'

Then she began to rail so bitterly,
With all her damsels, he was stricken
mute,
But when she mock'd his vows and the
great King,
Lighted on words 'For pity of thine
own self,
Peace, Lady, peace is he not thine and
mine?'
'Thou fool,' she said, 'I never heard his
voice
But long'd to break away Unbind him
now,
And thrust him out of doors, for save
he be
Fool to the midmost marrow of his bones,
He will return no more' And those, her
three,
Laugh'd, and unbound, and thrust him
from the gate

And after this, a week beyond, again
She call'd them, saying, 'There he
watches yet,
There like a dog before his master's door'
Kick'd, he returns do ye not hate him,
ye?
Ye know yourselves how can ye bide at
peace,
Affronted with his fulsome innocence?
Are ye but creatures of the board and bed,
No men to strike? Fall on him all at
once,
And if ye slay him I reck not if ye fail,
Give ye the slave mine order to be bound,
Bind him as heretofore, and bring him in
It may be ye shall slay him in his bonds'

She spake, and at her will they couch'd
their spears,
Three against one and Gawain passing
by,
Bound upon solitary adventure, saw
Low down beneath the shadow of those
towers
A villainy, three to one and thro' his
heart
The fire of honour and all noble deeds
Flash'd, and he call'd, 'I strike upon thy
side—
The cutlits!' 'Nay,' said Pelleas, 'but
forbear,
He needs no aid who doth his lady's will'

So Gawain, looking at the villainy done,
Forbore, but in his heart and eagerness
Trembled and quiver'd, as the dog, with-
held
A moment from the victim that he sees
Before him, shivers, ere he springs and
kills

And Pelleas overthrew them, one to
three,
And they rose up, and bound, and brought
him in
Then first her anger, leaving Pelleas,
burn'd
Full on her knights in many an evil name
Of craven, weakling, and thrice-beaten
hound

'Yet, take him, ye that scarce are fit to touch,
Far less to bind, your victor, and thrust him out,
And let who will release him from his bonds
And if he comes again'—there she brake short,
And Pelleas answer'd, 'Lady, for indeed
I loved you and I deem'd you beautiful,
I cannot brook to see your beauty mar'd
Thro' evil spite and if ye love me not,
I cannot bear to dream you so forsworn
I had liefer ye were worthy of my love,
Than to be loved again of you—farewell,
And tho' ye kill my hope, not yet my love,
Vex not yourself ye will not see me more'

While thus he spake, she gazed upon the man
Of princely bearing, tho' in bonds, and thought,
'Why have I push'd him from me? this man loves,
If love there be yet him I loved not
Why?
I deem'd him fool? yea, so? or that in him
A something—was it nobler than my self?—
Seem'd my reproach? He is not of my kind
He could not love me, did he know me well
Nay, let him go—and quickly' And her knights
Laugh'd not, but thrust him bounden out of door

Forth sprang Gawain, and loosed him from his bonds,
And flung them o'er the walls, and after wud,
Shaking his hands, as from a larva's rag,
'Faith of my body,' he said, 'and art thou not—
Yea thou art he, whom late our Arthur made
Knight of his table, yea and he that won

The ciclet? wherefore hast thou so defamed
Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest,
As let these cattiffs on thee work their will?'

And Pelleas answer'd, 'O, then wills are his
For whom I won the ciclet, and mine, heis,
Thus to be bounden, so to see her face,
Maid tho' it be with spite and mockery now,
Other than when I found her in the woods,
And tho' she hath me bounden but in spite,
And all to flout me, when they bring me in,
Let me be bounden, I shall see her face,
Else must I die thro' mine unhappiness'

And Gawain answer'd kindly tho' in scorn,
'Why, let my lady bind me if she will,
And let my lady beat me if she will
But in she send her delegate to thiall
These fighting hands of mine—Christ kill me then
But I will slice him handless by the wrist,
And let my lady seal the stump for him,
Howl as he may But hold me for your friend
Come, ye know nothing here I pledge my troth,
Yea, by the honour of the Table Round,
I will be leal to thee and work thy work,
And tame thy jailing princess to thine hand
Lend me thine horse and arms, and I will say
That I have slain thee She will let me in
To hear the manner of thy fight and fall,
Then, when I come within her counsels, then
From pime to vesper will I chant thy praise
As prouest knight and truest lover, more
Than any have sung thee living, till she long

To have thee back in lusty life agun,
 Not to be bound, save by white bonds
 and wam,
 Dearer than freedom Wherefore now
 thy horse
 And amour let me go be comforted
 Give me three days to melt her fancy,
 and hope
 The third night hence will bring thee
 news of gold'

Then Pelleas lent his horse and all his
 aims,
 Saving the goodly sword, his prize, and
 took
 Gawain's, and said, 'Betray me not, but
 help—
 Art thou not he whom men call light of
 love?'

'Ay,' said Gawain, 'for women be so
 light'
 Then bounded forward to the castle walls,
 And raised a bugle hanging from his neck,
 And winded it, and that so musically
 That all the old echoes hidden in the
 wall
 Rang out like hollow woods at hunting
 tide

Up ran a score of damsels to the tower,
 'Avaunt,' they cried, 'our lady loves thee
 not'
 But Gawain lifting up his vizor sad,
 'Gawain am I, Gawain of Arthur's court,
 And I have slain this Pelleas whom ye
 hate
 Behold his horse and armour Open
 gates,
 And I will make you merry'

And down they ran,
 Her damsels, crying to their lady, 'Lo!
 Pelleas is dead—he told us—he that hath
 His horse and armour will ye let him in?
 He slew him!' Gawain, Gawain of the
 court,
 Sir Gawain—there he waits below the
 wall,
 Blowing his bugle as who should say him
 nay'

And so, leave given, straight on thro'
 open door
 Rode Gawain, whom she greeted cour-
 teously
 'Dead, is it so?' she ask'd 'Ay, ay,'
 said he,
 'And oft in dying cried upon your name'
 'Pity on him,' she answer'd, 'a good
 knight,
 But never let me bide one hour at peace'
 'Ay,' thought Gawain, 'and you be fair
 enow
 But I to your dead man have given my
 troth,
 That whom ye loathe, him will I make
 you love'

So those three days, aimless about the
 land,
 Lost in a doubt, Pelleas wandering
 Waited, until the third night brought a
 moon
 With promise of large light on woods and
 ways

Hot was the night and silent, but a
 sound
 Of Gawain ever coming, and this lay—
 Which Pellers had heard sung before the
 Queen,
 And seen her sadden listening—next his
 heart,
 And man'd his rest—'A worm within the
 rose'

'A rose, but one, none other rose had I,
 A rose, one rose, and this was wondrous
 fur,
 One rose, a rose that gladden'd earth and
 sky,
 One rose, my rose, that sweeten'd all
 mine air—
 I cared not for the thorns, the thorns
 were there

'One rose, a rose to gather by and by,
 One rose, a rose, to gather and to wear,
 No rose but one—what other rose had I?
 One rose, my rose, a rose that will not
 die,—
 He dies who loves it,—if the worm be
 there'

This tender rhyme, and evermore the
doubt,
'Why lingers Gawain with his golden
news?'
So shook him that he could not rest, but
rode
Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his
horse
Hard by the gates Wide open were the
gates,
And no watch kept, and in thio' these
he past,
And heard but his own steps, and his
own heart
Beating, for nothing moved but his own
self,
And his own shadow Then he crost
the court,
And spied not any light in hall or bower,
But saw the postern portal also wide
Yawning, and up a slope of garden, all
Of roses white and red, and bimbles mixt
And overgrowing them, went on, and
found,
Here too, all hush'd below the mellow
moon,
Save that one muilet from a tiny cave
Came lightening downward, and so spilt
itself
Among the roses, and was lost again

Then was he ware of three pavilions
near'd
Above the bushes, gilden perkt in one,
Red after revel, dion'd hei ludane knights
Slumbering, and then three squares across
then feet
In one, their malice on the placid lip
Froz'n by sweet sleep, four of her damsels
lay
And in the thud, the circlet of the jousts
Bound on her brow, were Gawain and
Ettarie

Back, as a hand that pushes thio' the
leaf
To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew
Back, as a coward slinks from what he
fears
To cope with, or a traitor proven, or hound

Berten, did Pelleas in an utter shame
Creep with his shadow thio' the court
again,
Finger'ng at his sword-handle until he
stood
There on the castle-bridge once more, and
thought,
'I will go back, and slay them where they
lie'

And so went back, and seeing them yet
in sleep
Said, 'Ye, that so dishallow the holy
sleep,
Your sleep is death,' and drew the sword,
and thought,
'What! slay a sleeping knight?' the King
hath bound
And sworn me to this brotherhood,'
again,
'Alas that ever a knight should be so
false'
Then turn'd, and so return'd, and groan-
ing laid
The naked sword athwart their naked
throats,
There left it, and them sleeping, and she
lay,
The circlet of the tourney round her
brows,
And the sword of the tourney across her
throat

And forth he past, and mounting on
his horse
Stared at hei towers that, larger than
themselves
In their own darkness, throng'd into the
moon
Then crush'd the saddle with his thighs,
and clench'd
His hands, and madden'd with himself
and moan'd

'Would they have risen against me in
then blood
At the last day? I might have answer'd
them
Even before high God O towers so
strong,

Huge, solid, would that even while I gave
 The clack of earthquake shivering to your
 base
 Split you, and Hell buist up your haulot
 loofs
 Bellowing, and charr'd you thro' and thro'
 within,
 Black as the harlot's heart—hollow as a
 skull !
 Let the fierce east scream thro' your eye
 let holes,
 And whirl the dust of harlots round and
 round
 In dung and nettles ! hiss, snake—I saw
 him there—
 Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell Who
 yells
 Here in the still sweet summer night, but
 I—
 I, the poor Pelleas whom she call'd her
 fool ?
 Fool, beast—he, she, or I ? myself most
 fool,
 Beast too, as lacking human wit—dis-
 graced,
 Dishonour'd all for trial of true love—
 Love?—we be all alike only the King
 Hath made us fools and hais O noble
 vows !
 O great and sane and simple race of brutes
 That own no lust because they have no
 law !
 For why should I have loved her to my
 shame ?
 I loathe her, as I loved her to my shame
 I never loved her, I but lusted for her—
 Away—'

He dash'd the rowel into his horse,
 And bounded forth and vanish'd thro' the
 night

Then she, that felt the cold touch on
 her throat,
 Awaking knew the sword, and turn'd
 herself
 To Gawain 'Liar, for thou hast not slain
 This Pelleas ! here he stood, and might
 have slain
 Meand thyself ' And he that tells the tale

Says that her ever veering fancy turn'd
 To Pelleas, as the one true knight on
 earth,
 And only lover, and thro' her love her
 life
 Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain

But he by wild and way, for half the
 night,
 And over hard and soft, striking the sod
 From out the soft, the spail from off the
 hard,
 Rode till the star above the wakening sun,
 Beside that tower where Peicivale was
 cowl'd,
 Glanced from the rosy forehead of the
 dawn
 For so the words were flash'd into his
 heart
 He knew not whence or wherefore ' O
 sweet star,
 Pure on the virgin forehead of the dawn !'
 And there he would have wept, but felt
 his eyes
 Harder and drier than a fountain bed
 In summer thither came the village girls
 And linger'd talking, and they come no
 more
 Till the sweet heavens have fill'd it from
 the heights
 Again with living waters in the change
 Of seasons hard his eyes, harder his
 heart
 Seem'd, but so weary were his limbs,
 that he,
 Gasping, 'Of Arthur's hall am I, but here,
 Here let me rest and die,' cast himself
 down,
 And gulfd his griefs in inmost sleep, so
 lay,
 Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired
 The hall of Meilin, and the morning star
 Reel'd in the smoke, brake into flame,
 and fell
 He woke, and being ware of some one
 nigh,
 Sent hands upon him, as to tear him,
 crying,
 'False ! and I held thee pure as Guinevere '

But Percivale stood near him and
replied,
'Am I but false as Guinevere is pure?
O! art thou mazed with dreams? or being
one
Of our free-spoken Table hast not heard
That Lancelot'—there he check'd him
self and paused

Then fared it with Sir Pellers as with
one
Who gets a wound in battle, and the sword
That made it plunges thro' the wound
again,
And pricks it deeper and he shrank and
wail'd,
'Is the Queen false?' and Percivale was
mute
'Have any of our Round Table held then
vows?'
And Percivale made answer not a word
'Is the King true?' 'The King' said
Percivale
'Why then let men couple it once with
wolves
What' art thou mad?'

But Pellers, leaping up,
Ran thro' the doors and vaulted on his
horse
And fled small pity upon his horse had
he,
Or on himself, or any, and when he met
A cupple, one that held a hand for arms—
Hunch'd as he was, and like an old dwarf
elm
That turns its back on the salt blast, the
boy
Paused not, but overrode him, shouting,
'False,
And false with Gawain!' and so left him
bruised
And batter'd, and fled on, and hill and
wood
Went ever streaming by him till the gloom,
That follows on the turning of the world,
Darken'd the common path he twitch'd
the reins,
And made his beast that better knew it,
swerve

Now off it and now on, but when he saw
High up in heaven the hall that Merlin
built,
Blackening against the dead green stripes
of even,
'Black nest of rats,' he groan'd, 'ye build
too high'

Not long thereafter from the city gates
Issued Sir Lancelot riding airy,
Warm with a gracious parting from the
Queen,
Peace at his heart, and gazing at a stru
And marveling what it was on whom
the boy,
Across the silent seeded meadow grass
Boine, clish'd and Lancelot, saying,
'What name hast thou
That ridest here so blindly and so
hud?'
'I have no name,' he shouted, 'I scourge
am I,
To lash the treasons of the Table Round'
'Yea, but thy name?' 'I have many
names,' he cried
'I am wraith and shame and hate and evil
fame,
And like a poisonous wind I pass to
blast
And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the
Queen'
'First over me,' said Lancelot, 'shalt
thou pass'
'Fight therefore,' yell'd the other, and
either knight
Drew back a spruce, and when they closed,
at once
The wery steed of Pelleas floundering
flung
His rider, who call'd out from the dark
field,
'Thou art false as Hell slay me I have
no sword'
Then Lancelot, 'Yea, between thy lips—
and sharp,
But here will I disedge it by thy death'
'Slay then,' he shriek'd, 'my will is to be
slun,'
And Lancelot, with his heel upon the
fall'n,

Rolling his eyes, a moment stood, then
spake
‘Rise, weakling, I am Lancelot, say thy
say’

And Lancelot slowly rode his waihorse
back

To Camelot, and Sir Pelleas in brief while
Caught his unbroken limbs from the dark
field,

And follow’d to the city It chanced that
both

Brake into hall together, worn and pale
There with her knights and dames was
Guinevere

Full wonderingly she gazed on Lancelot
So soon return’d, and then on Pelleas,
him

Who had not greeted her, but cast him-
self

Down on a bench, hard breathing ‘Have
ye fought?’

She ask’d of Lancelot ‘Ay, my Queen,’
he said

‘And thou hast overthrown him?’ ‘Ay,
my Queen’

Then she, turning to Pelleas, ‘O young
knight,

Hath the great heart of knighthood in
these fail’d

So far thou canst not bide, unfrowardly,
A fall from him?’ Then, for he answer’d
not,

‘O! hast thou other griefs? If I, the
Queen,

May help them, loose thy tongue, and let
me know’

But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce
She quail’d, and he, hissing ‘I have no
sword,’

Spang from the door into the dark
The Queen

Look’d hard upon her lover, he on her,
And each foresaw the dolorous day to
be

And all talk died, as in a grove all song
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey,
Then a long silence came upon the hall,
And Modred thought, ‘The time is hard
at hand’

THE LAST TOURNAMENT

DAGONET, the fool, whom Gawain in his
mood

Had made mock knight of Aithui’s Table
Round,

At Camelot, high above the yellowing
woods,

Danced like a wither’d leaf before the hall
And toward him from the hall, with harp
in hand,

And from the crown thereof a carcanet
Of ruby swaying to and fro, the prize
Of Tristram in the jousts of yesterday,
Came Tristram, saying, ‘Why skip ye
so, Sir Fool?’

For Aithui and Sir Lancelot riding once
Far down beneath a winding wall of rock
Heard a child wail A stump of oak
half dead,

From roots like some black coil of carven
snakes,

Clutch’d at the crag, and started thio’
mid air

Bearing an eagle’s nest and thro’ the tree
Rush’d ever a rainy wind, and thro’ the
wind

Pierced ever a child’s cry and crag and
tree

Scaling, Sir Lancelot from the perilous
nest,

This rubyncklace thrice around her neck,
And all unscar’d from beak or talon,
brought

A maiden babe, which Aithur pitying
took,

Then gave it to his Queen to rear the
Queen

But coldly acquiescing, in her white arms
Received, and after loved it tenderly,
And named it Nestling, so forgot himself
A moment, and her cares, till that young
life

Being smitten in mid heaven with mortal
cold

Past from her, and in time the carcanet
Vext her with plaintive memories of the
child

So she, delivering it to Arthur, said,
 'Take thou the jewels of this dead in
 nocence,
 And make them, an thou wilt, a tourney-
 prize'

To whom the King, 'Peace to thine
 eagle borne
 Dead nestling, and this honour after
 death,
 Following thy will' but, O my Queen,
 I muse
 Why ye not weal on arm, or neck, or
 zone
 Those diamonds that I rescued from the
 tarn,
 And Lancelot won, methought, for thee
 to weal'

'Would rather you had let them fall,'
 she cried,
 'Plunge and be lost—ill fated as they
 were,
 A bitterness to me!—ye look amazed,
 Not knowing they were lost as soon as
 given—
 Slid from my hands, when I was leaning
 out
 Above the river—that unhappy child
 Past in her barge but some luck will go
 With these rich jewels, seeing that they
 came
 Not from the skeleton of a brother-slayer,
 But the sweet body of a maiden babe
 Perchance—who knows?—the purest of
 thy knights
 May win them for the purest of my maids'

She ended, and the cry of a great jousts
 With trumpet blowings ran on all the
 ways
 From Camelot in among the faded fields
 To furthest towers, and everywhere the
 knights
 Arm'd for a day of glory before the King

But on the hither side of that loud morn
 Into the hall stagger'd, his visage mottled
 From ear to ear with dogwhip weals, his
 nose

Bridge broken, one eye out, and one hand
 off,
 And one with shatter'd fingers dangling
 lame,
 A churl, to whom indignantly the King,

'My churl, for whom Christ died, what
 evil beast
 Hath drawn his claws athwart thy face?
 or fiend?
 Man was it who murr'd heaven's image
 in thee thus?'

Then, sputtering thro' the hedge of
 splinter'd teeth,
 Yet strangers to the tongue, and with
 blunt stump
 Pitch-blacken'd sawing the air, said the
 maim'd churl,

'He took them and he gave them to
 his tower—
 Some hold he was a noble knight of thine—
 A hundred goodly ones—the Red Knight,
 he—
 Loid, I was tending swine, and the Red
 Knight
 Brake in upon me and drove them to his
 tower,
 And when I call'd upon thy name as one
 That doest right by gentle and by churl,
 Maim'd me and maul'd, and would out-
 right have slain,
 Save that he swore me to a message,
 saying,
 "Tell thou the King and all his liars, that I
 Have founded my Round Table in the
 North,
 And whatsoever his own knights have
 sworn
 My knights have sworn the counter to
 it—and say
 My tower is full of harlots, like his court,
 But mine are worthier, seeing they profess
 To be none other than themselves—and say
 My knights are all adulterers like his own,
 But mine are truer, seeing they profess
 To be none other, and say his hour is come,
 The heathen are upon him, his long lance
 Broken, and his Excalibur a straw'"

Then Arthur turn'd to Kay the sene-
schal,
'Take thou my churl, and tend him
curiously
Like a king's heir, till all his hurts be
whole
The heathen—but that ever climbing
wave,
Hurl'd back again so often in empty form,
Hath lain for years at rest—and renegades,
Thieves, bandits, leavings of confusion,
whom
The wholesome realm is purged of other-
where,
Friends, thro' your manhood and your
fealty,—now
Make their last head like Satan in the
North
My younger knights, new-made, in whom
your flower
Waits to be solid fruit of golden deeds,
Move with me toward them quelling,
which achieved,
The loneliest ways are safe from shore to
shore
But thou, Sir Lancelot, sitting in my place
Enchur'd to-morrow, abide in the field,
For wherefore shouldst thou come to mingle
with it,
Only to yield my Queen her own again?
Speak, Lancelot, thou art silent—is it
well?'—

Thereto Sir Lancelot answer'd, 'It is
well
Yet better if the King abide, and leave
The leading of his younger knights to me
Else, for the King has will'd it, it is well'

Then Arthur rose and Lancelot follow'd
him,
And while they stood without the doors,
the King
Turn'd to him saying, 'Is it then so well?
Or mine the blame that oft I seem as he
Of whom was written, "A sound is in his
ears"?'
The foot that lingers, bidden go,—the
glance
That only seems half loyal to command,—

A manner somewhat fallen from rever-
ence—
Or have I dream'd the bearing of our
knights
Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?
Or whence the fever lest this my realm,
uprear'd,
By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
From fit confusion and brute violences,
Reel back into the beast, and be no
more?'—

He spoke, and taking all his younger
knights,
Down the slope city rode, and sharply
turn'd
North by the gate In her high bower
the Queen,
Working a tapestry, lifted up her head,
Watch'd her lord pass, and knew not that
she sigh'd
Then as across her memory the strange
rhyme
Of bygone Merlin, 'Where is he who
knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he
goes'

But when the morning of a tournament,
By these in earnest those in mockery call'd
The Tournament of the Dead Innocence,
Broke with a wet wind blowing, Lancelot,
Round whose sick head all night, like
birds of prey,
The words of Arthur flying shuck'd, rose
And down a streetway hung with folds of
pure
White samite, and by fountains running
wine,
Where children sat in white with cups of
gold,
Moved to the lists, and there, with slow
sad steps
Ascending, fill'd his double dragon'd
chair

He glanced and saw the stately galleries,
Dame, damsel, each thro' worship of their
Queen
White robed in honour of the stainless
child,

And some with scatter'd jewels, like a
bank
Of maiden snow mingled with spaiks of
fire
He look'd but once, and veil'd his eyes
again

The sudden trumpet sounded as in a
dream

To ears but half-awaked, then one low roll
Of Autumn thunder, and the jousts began
And ever the wind blew, and yellowing leaf
And gloom and gleam, and shower and
shorn plume

Went down it sighing wearily, as one
Who sits and gazes on a faded fire,
When all the goodlier guests were past away,
Sat their great umpire, looking o'er the
lists

He saw the laws that ruled the tournament
Broken, but spoke not, once, a knight
cast down

Before his throne of arbitration cursed
The dead brabe and the follies of the King,
And once the pieces of a helmet crack'd,
And show'd him, like a vermin in its hole,
Mocked, a narrow face upon he heard
The voice that bellow'd round the barriers
run

An ocean sounding welcome to one knight,
But newly enter'd, taller than the rest,
And armour'd all in forest green, whereon
There tript a hundred tiny silver deer,
And wearing but a holly spray for crest,
With ever scattering berries, and on shield
A spear, a harp, a bugle—Tristram—late
From overseas in Brittany return'd,
And marriage with a princess of that realm,
Isolt the White—Sir Tristram of the
Woods—

Whom Lancelot knew, had held sometime
with pain

His own against him, and now yearn'd to
shake

The burden off his heart in one full shock
With Tristram even to death his strong
hands gript

And dimt the gilt dragons right and left,
Until he grow'd for wrath—so many of
those,

That wane their ladies' colours on the
casque,

Drew from before Sir Tristram to the
bounds,

And there with gibes and flickering
mockeries

Stood, while he muttered, 'Claven crests'
O shame'

What fruit have these in whom they swear
to love?

The glory of our Round Table is no more'

So Tristram won, and Lancelot gave,
the gems,

Not speaking other word than 'Hast thou
won?'

Art thou the priest, brother? See, the hand
Wherewith thou takest this, is red' to
whom

Tristram, half-plagued by Lancelot's
linguorous mood,

Made answer, 'Ay, but wherefore toss
me this

Like a dry bone cast to some hungry hound?
Let be thy fair Queen's fantasy—Strength
of herit

And might of limb, but mainly use and skill,
Are winners in this pastime of our King
My hand—belike the lance hath dript
upon it—

No blood of mine, I trow, but O chief
knight,

Right arm of Arthur in the battlefield,
Great brother, thou nor I have made the
world,

Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine

And Tristram round the gallery made
his hoise

Caracol, then bow'd his homage, bluntly
saying,

'Fair damsels, each to him who worships
each

Sole Queen of Beauty and of love, behold
I his dry my Queen of Beauty is not here'

And most of these were mute, some anger'd,
one

Murmuring, 'All courtesy is dead,' and
one,

'The glory of our Round Table is no more'

Then fell thick rain, plume droopt and
 mantle clung,
 And pettish cries awoke, and the wan day
 Went glooming down in wet and weariness
 But under her black brows a swaithy one
 I laugh'd shrilly, crying, 'Praise the patient
 saints,
 Our one white day of Innocence hath past,
 Tho' somewhat draggled at the skirt So
 be it
 The snowdrop only, flowering thio' the
 year,
 Would make the world as blank as
 Winter tide
 Come—let us gladden their sad eyes, our
 Queen's
 And Lancelot's, at this night's solemnity
 With all the kindlier colours of the field'

So dame and damsel glitter'd at the
 feast
 Variously gay for he that tells the tale
 Liken'd them, saying, as when an hour of
 cold
 Falls on the mountain in midsummer
 snows,
 And all the purple slopes of mountain
 flower
 Pass under white, till the warm hour
 returns
 With veer of wind, and all are flowers
 again,
 So dame and damsel cast the simple white,
 And glowing in all colours, the live grass,
 Rose campion, bluebell, kingcup, poppy,
 glanced
 About the revels, and with mirth so loud
 Beyond all use, that, half amazed, the
 Queen,
 And wroth at Tristram and the lawless
 jousts,
 Brake up their sports, then slowly to her
 bowel
 Parted, and in her bosom pain was lord

And little Dagonet on the morrow
 morn,
 High over all the yellowing Autumn-tide,
 Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall

Then Tristram saying, 'Why skip ye so,
 Sir Fool?'
 Wheel'd round on either heel, Dagonet
 replied,
 'Belike for lack of wiser company,
 Or being fool, and seeing too much wit
 Makes the world rotten, why, belike I skip
 To know myself the wisest knight of all'
 'Ay, fool,' said Tristram, 'but 'tis eating
 dry
 To dance without a catch, a roundelay
 To dance to' Then he twangled on his
 harp,
 And while he twangled little Dagonet stood
 Quiet as any water sodden log
 Stay'd in the wandering warble of a brook,
 But when the twangling ended, skipt again,
 And being ask'd, 'Why skipt ye not, Sir
 Fool?'

Made answer, 'I had hefer twenty years
 Skip to the broken music of my brains
 I han any broken music thou canst make'
 Then Tristram, waiting for the quip to
 come,
 'Good now, what music have I broken,
 fool?'
 And little Dagonet, skipping, 'Arthur,
 the King's,
 For when thou playest that air with Queen
 Isol,
 Thou makest broken music with thy bird,
 Her duntier namesake down in Brittany—
 And so thou breakest Arthur's music too'
 'Save for that broken music in thy brains,
 Sir fool,' said Tristram, 'I would break
 thy head
 Fool, I came late, the heathen wars were
 o'er,
 The life had flown, we sware but by the
 shell—
 I am but a fool to reason with a fool—
 Come, thou art ciabb'd and sour but
 lean me down,
 Sir Dagonet, one of thy long asses' ears,
 And harken if my music be not true

' "Free love—free field—we love but
 while we may
 The woods are hush'd, their music is no
 more

The leaf is dead, the yearning past away
New leaf, new life—the days of frost are
o'er

New life, new love, to suit the newer day
New loves are sweet as those that went
before

Free love—free field—we love but while
we may "

'Ye might have moved slow—measure
to my tune,
Not stood stockstill I made it in the
woods,
And heard it ring as true as tested gold '

But Dagonet with one foot poised in
his hand,
'Friend, did ye mark that fountain
yesterday
Made to run wine?—but this had run
itself
All out like a long life to a sour end—
And them that round it sat with golden
cups

To hand the wine to whosoever came—
The twelve small damosels white as
Innocence,
In honour of poor Innocence the babe,
Who left the gems which Innocence the
Queen

Lent to the King, and Innocence the King
Gave for a prize—and one of those white
slips

Handed her cup and piped, the pretty one,
"Drink, drink, Sir Fool," and thereupon
I drank,

Spat—pish—the cup was gold, the
draught was mud '

And Tristram, 'Was it muddier than
thy gibles?'

Is all the laughter gone dead out of thee?—
Not marking how the knighthood mock
thee, fool—

"Fear God honour the King—his one
true knight—

Sole follower of the vows"—for here be
they

Who knew thee swine now before I came,
Smuttier than blasted grain but when
the King

Had made thee fool, thy vanity so shot up
It frightened all free fool from out thy heart,
Which left thee less than fool, and less
than swine,
A naked tught—yet swine I hold thee still,
For I have flung thee pearls and find thee
swine '

And little Dagonet mincing with his feet,
'Knight, an ye fling those rubies round
my neck

In lieu of hairs, I'll hold thou hast some
touch

Of music, since I care not for thy pearls
Swine? I have willow'd, I have wash'd
—the world

Is flesh and shadow—I have had my day
The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind
Hath foul'd me—an I wallow'd, then I
wash'd—

I have had my dry and my philosophies—
And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's
fool

Swine, say ye? swine, goats, asses, rams
and geese

Triop'd round a Prynim huper once,
who thiumm'd

On such a wire as musically as thou
Some such fine song—but never a king's
fool '

And Tristram, 'Then were swine,
goats, asses, geese

The wiser fools, seeing thy Prynim brud
Had such a mystery of his mystery
That he could hup his wife up out of hell '

Then Dagonet, tuning on the ball of
his foot,

'And whither hup'st thou thine? down!
and thyself

Down! and two more a helpful huper
thou,

That hapest downward! Dost thou know
the stru

We call the hairp of Arthur up in heaven?"

And Tristram, 'Ay, Sir Fool, for when
our King

Was victor wellnigh dry by dry the
knights,

Glorying in each new glory, set his name
High on all hills, and in the signs of
heaven'

And Dagonet answer'd, 'Ay, and when
the land
Was freed, and the Queen false, ye set
yourself
To babble about him, all to show your
wit—
And whether he were King by courtesy,
Or King by right—and so went hurping
down
The black king's highway, got so far, and
grew
So witty that ye play'd at ducks and
drakes
With Arthur's vows on the great lake of
fire
Tuwhoo! do ye see it? do ye see the
strut?'

'Nay, fool,' said Tristram, 'not in
open day'
And Dagonet, 'Nay, nor will I see it
and hear
It makes a silent music up in heaven,
And I, and Arthur and the angels hear,
And then we skip' 'Lo, fool,' he said,
'ye talk
Fool's treason is the King thy brother
fool?'
Then little Dagonet clapt his hands and
shuddered,
'Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of
fools!
Conceits himself as God that he can make
Figs out of thistles, silk from bustles, milk
From burning spurge, honey from hornet
combs,
And men from beasts—Long live the king
of fools!'

And down the city Dagonet danced
away,
But thro' the slowly-mellowing avenues
And solitary passes of the wood
Rode Tristram toward Lyonesse and
the west
Before him fled the face of Queen Isolte
With ruby circled neck, but evermore

Past, as a rustle or twitter in the wood
Made dull his inner, keen his outer eye
For all that walk'd, or crept, or peich'd,
or flew
Anon the face, as, when a gust hath
blown,
Unruffling waters re collect the shape
Of one that in them sees himself, return'd,
But at the slot or fewmets of a deer,
Or ev'n a fall'n feather, vanish'd again

So on for all that day from lawn to lawn
Thro' many a league long bowe he rode
At length
A lodge of intertwisted beechen boughs
Furze cramm'd, and blacken roof, the
which himself
Built for a summer day with Queen Isolte
Against a shower, dark in the golden
grove
Appearing, sent his fancy back to where
She lived a moon in that low lodge with
him
Till Mark her lord had past, the Cornish
King,
With six or seven, when Tristram was
away,
And snatch'd her thence, yet dreading
worse than shame
Henceforth Tristram, spoke not any
word,
But bode his hour, devising wretchedness

And now that desert lodge to Tristram
lookt
So sweet, that halting, in the past, and
sunk
Down on a dust of foliage random blown,
But could not rest for musing how to
smoothe
And sleek his marriage over to the Queen
Perchance in lone Tintagel far from all
The tonguesters of the court she had not
heard
But then what folly had sent him overseas
After she left him lonely here? a name?
Was it the name of one in Brittany,
Isolte, the daughter of the King? 'Isolte
Of the white hands' they call'd her the
sweet name

Allured him first, and then the maid her
self,
Who served him well with those white
hands of hers,
And loved him well, until himself had
thought
He loved her also, wedded easily,
But left her all as easily, and return'd
The black-blue Irish hair and Irish eyes
Had drawn him home—what marvel?
then he had
His brows upon the dusted leaf and
dream'd

He seem'd to pace the strand of Britanny
Between Isolt of Britun and his bride,
And show'd them both the ruby chain,
and both

Began to struggle for it, till his Queen
Grispt it so hard, that all her hand was red
Then cried the Breton, 'Look, her hand
is red!

These be no rubies, this is frozen blood,
And melts with in her hand—her hand is
hot

With ill desires, but this I gave thee, look,
Is all as cool and white as my flower!
Follow'd a rush of angels' wings, and then
A whimpering of the spirit of the child,
Because the tyrant had spoil'd her cr
cinct

He dream'd, but Arthur with a hun
dred spears
Rode far, till o'er the illimitable ice,
And many a glancing plish and fallow
isle,

The wide wind sunset of the misty marsh
Glared on a huge machicolated tower
That stood with open doors, whereout
was toll'd

A roar of riot, as from men secure
Amid their marshes, suffrains at their ease
Among their harlot-brides, an evil song
'Lo there,' said one of Arthur's youth,
for there,

High on a grim dead tree before the tower,
A goodly brother of the Table Round
Swung by the neck and on the boughs
a shield

Showing a shower of blood in a field now,
And therebeside a hoar, inflamed the
knights

At that dishonour done the gilded spui,
Till each would clash the shield, and blow
the hoar

But Arthur waved them back Alone he
rode

Then at the dry harsh roar of the great
hoar,

That sent the face of all the marsh aloft
An ever upward-rushing storm and cloud
Of shock and plume, the Red Knight
heard, and all,

Even to utmost lance and topmost helm,
In blood-red armour sallying, howl'd to
the King,

'The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash
thee flat!—

Lo! at thou not that eunuch hearted
King

Who fain had clipt thee manhood from
the world—

The woman-worshipper? Yea, God's
curse, and I!

Slun was the brother of my paramour
By a knight of thine, and I that heard
her whine

And snivel, being eunuch-hearted too,
Swore by the scorpion worm that twists
in hell,

And stings itself to everlasting death,
To hang whatever knight of thine I fought
And tumbled Art thou King?—Look
to thy life!

He ended Arthur knew the voice, the
face

Wellnigh was helmet-hidden, and the
name

Went wandering somewhere dawning in
his mind

And Arthur design'd not use of word or
sword,

But let the drunkard, as he stretch'd from
horse

To strike him, overbalancing his bulk,
Down from the causeway heavily to the
swamp

Fall, as the crest of some slow aching
 wave,
 Heard in dead night along that table-
 shore,
 Drops flat, and after the great waters
 break
 Whiten'g for half a league, and thin
 themselves,
 Far over sands marbled with moon and
 cloud,
 From less and less to nothing, thus he fell
 Head heavy, then the knights, who
 watch'd him, roar'd
 And shouted and leapt down upon the
 fall'n,
 There trampled out his face from being
 known,
 And sank his head in mude, and slimed
 themselves
 Nor heard the King for their own cries,
 but sprang
 Thio' open doois, and swording right and
 left
 Men, women, on their sodden faces,
 hui'd
 The tables over and the wines, and slew
 Till all the rafters rang with woman yell,
 And all the pavement stream'd with
 massacre
 Then, yell with yell echoing, they fired
 the tower,
 Which half that autumn night, like the
 live North,
 Red pulsing up thio' Alioth and Alcor,
 Made all above it, and a hundred meics
 About it, as the water Morb saw
 Come round by the East, and out beyond
 them flush'd
 The long low dune, and lazy-plunging sea

So all the ways were safe from shore to
 shore,
 But in the heart of Arthur pain was lord

Then, out of Tristram waking, the red
 dream
 Fled with a shout, and that low lodge
 return'd,
 Mid-forest, and the wind among the
 boughs

He whistled his good walhoise left to
 graze
 Among the forest greens, vaulted upon him,
 And rode beneath an ever showering leaf,
 Till one lone woman, weeping near a
 cross,
 Stay'd him 'Why weep ye?' 'Lord,'
 she said, 'my man
 Hath left me or is dead,' whereon he
 thought—
 'What, if she hate me now? I would
 not this
 What, if she love me still? I would not
 that
 I know not what I would'—but said to
 her,
 'Yet weep not thou, lest, if thy mate
 return,
 He find thy favour changed and love thee
 not'—
 Then pressing day by day thio' Lyonesse
 Last in a roky hollow, belling, heard
 The hounds of Mark, and felt the goodly
 hounds
 Yelp at his heart, but turning, past and
 gun'd
 Tintagil, half in sea, and high on land,
 A crown of towers

Down in a cracement sat,
 A low sea sunset gloiy'ng round her hair
 And glossy throated grace, Isolt the
 Queen
 And when she heard the feet of Tristram
 grind
 The spiring stone that scaled about her
 tower,
 Flush'd, started, met him at the doois,
 and there
 Belted his body with her white embrace,
 Crying aloud, 'Not Mark—not Mark,
 my soul'
 The footstep flutter'd me at first not he
 Cathike thro' his own castle steals my
 Mark,
 But warrior wise thou studest thio' his
 halls
 Who hates thee, as I him—even to the
 death
 My soul, I felt my hatred for my Mark

Quickened within me, and knew that thou
 wert nigh,
 To whom Sir Tristram smiling, 'I am
 here
 Let be thy Mark, seeing he is not thine'

And drawing somewhat backward she
 replied,
 'Can he be wond'g who is not even his
 own,
 But save for dread of thee had beaten me,
 Scratch'd, bitten, blinded, maim'd me
 somehow—Mark?

What rights are his that dare not strike
 for them?

Not lift a hand—not, tho' he found me
 thus!

But harken! have ye met him? hence he
 went

To-day for three days' hunting—as he
 said—

And so returns belike within an hour
 Mark's way, my soul—but eat not thou
 with Mark,

Because he hates thee even more than
 fears,

Nor drink and when thou passest any
 wood

Close nigh, lest an arrow from the bush
 Should leave me all alone with Mark and
 hell!

My God, the measure of my hate for
 Mark

Is as the measure of my love for thee'

So, pluck'd one way by hate and one
 by love,

Drunk'd of her force, again she sat, and
 spoke

To Tristram, as he knelt before her,
 saying,

'O hunter, and O blower of the horn,
 Harper, and thou hast been a lover too,
 For ere I mated with my shambling king,
 Ye twin had fallen out about the bride
 Of one—his name is out of me—the prize,
 If prize she was—(what mated—she
 could see)—

Thine, friend, and ever since my crown
 sucks

To wick thee villainously but, O Sir
 Knight,
 What dame or damsel have ye kneel'd to
 last?

And Tristram, 'Last to my Queen
 Paramount,
 Here now to my Queen Paramount of love
 And loveliness—ay, lovelier than when
 first
 Her light feet fell on our rough Lyonesse,
 Sailing from Ireland'

Softly laugh'd Isolt,
 'Flutter me not, for hath not our great
 Queen

My dole of beauty trebled?' and he said,
 'Her beauty is her beauty, and thine
 thine,

And thine is more to me—soft, gracious,
 kind—

Save when thy Mark is kindled on thy lips
 Most gracious, but she, haughty, even to
 him,

Lancelot, for I have seen him wane enow
 To make one doubt if ever the great Queen
 Have yielded him her love'

To whom Isolt,
 'Ah then, false hunter and false harper,
 thou

Who brakest thro' the scruple of my
 bond,

Calling me thy white hind, and saying
 to me

That Guenevere had sinn'd agunst the
 highest,

And I—misjoked with such a want of
 man—

That I could hardly sin against the lowest'

He answer'd, 'O my soul, be com-
 forted'

If this be sweet, to sin in leading strings,
 If here be comfort, and if ours be sin,
 Crown'd warrant had we for the crowning
 sin

That made us happy but how ye greet
 me—fear

And fault and doubt—no word of that
 fond tale—

Thy deep heart-yearnings, thy sweet
memories
Of Tristram in that year he was away'

And, saddening on the sudden, spake
Isolt,

'I had forgotten all in my strong joy
To see thee—yearnings?—ay! for, hour
by hour,

Here in the never ended afternoon,
O sweeter than all memories of thee,
Deeper than any yearnings after thee
Seem'd those far rolling, westward
smiling seas,

Watch'd from this tower Isolt of Britain
dash'd

Before Isolt of Brittany on the strand,
Would that have chill'd her bride-kiss?
Wedded her?

Fought in her father's battles? wounded
there?

The King was all fulfill'd with grateful
ness,

And she, my namesake of the hands, that
heir'd

Thy hut and heart with unguent and
caress—

Well—can I wish her any huge wrong
Than having known thee? her too hast
thou left

To pine and waste in those sweet
memories

O were I not my Mark's, by whom all
men

Are noble, I should hate thee more than
love'

And Tristram, fondling her light hands,
replied,

'Grace, Queen, for being loved she
loved me well

Did I love her? the name at least I loved
Isolt?—I fought his battles, for Isolt!

The night was dark, the true star set
Isolt!

The name was ruler of the dark——Isolt?
Care not for her! patient, and prayerful,
meek,

Pale-blooded, she will yield herself to
God'

And Isolt answer'd, 'Yea, and why
not I?

Mine is the larger need, who am not meek,
Pale-blooded, prayerful Let me tell
thee now

Here one black, mute midsummer night
I sat,

Lonely, but musing on thee, wondering
where,

Murmuring a light song I had heard thee
sing,

And once or twice I spake thy name aloud
Then flash'd a levin brand, and near me
stood,

In fuming sulphur blue and green, a
fiend—

Mark's way to steal behind one in the
dark—

For there was Mark "He has wedded
her," he said,

Not said, but hiss'd it then this crown
of towers

So shook to such a roar of all the sky,
That here in utter dark I swoon'd away,

And woke again in utter dark, and cried,
"I will flee hence and give myself to
God"—

And thou wert lying in thy new leman's
arms'

Then Tristram, ever dallying with her
hand,

'May God be with thee, sweet, when old
and gray,

And past desire' a saying that anger'd
her

"May God be with thee, sweet, when
thou art old,

And sweet no more to me!" I need
Him now

For when had Lancelot utter'd aught so
gross

Ev'n to the swineherd's malkin in the
mast?

The greater man, the greater courtesy
For other was the Tristram, Arthur's
knight!

But thou, thio' ever hounding thy wild
beasts—

Save that to touch a hair, tilt with a lance

Becomes thee well—at grown wild beast
thyself

How darest thou, if lover, push me even
In fancy from thy side, and set me fu
In the gray distance, half a life away,
Her to be loved no more? Unsay it,
unsweat!

Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak,
Broken with Mark and hate and solitude,
Thy marriage and mine own, that I
should suck

Lies like sweet wines hie to me I believe
Will ye not lie? not swear, as thou ye
kneel,

And solemnly as when ye swore to him,
The man of men, our King—My God,
the power

Was once in vows when men believed the
King!

They lied not then, who swore, and thro'
their vows

The King prevailing made his realm —
I say,

Swear to me thou wilt love me ev'n when
old,

Gray hair'd, and past desire, and in de
spair!

Then Tristram, pacing moodily up and
down,

'Vows! did you keep the vow you made
to Mark

More than I mine? Lied, say ye? Nay,
but leant,

The vow that binds too strictly snaps
itself—

My knighthood taught me this—ay, being
snapt—

We run more counter to the soul therof
Than had we never sworn I swear no
more

I swore to the great King, and am for
sworn

For once—ev'n to the height—I honour'd
him

"Man, is he man at all?" methought,
when first

I rode from our rough Lyonesse, and
beheld

That victor of the Pagan throned in hall—

His hair, a sun that ray'd from off a brow
Like hillsnow high in heaven, the steel
blue eyes,

The golden beard that clothed his lips
with light—

Moreover, that wend legend of his birth,
With Merlin's mystic babble about his end
Amazed me, then, his foot was on a stool
Shaped as a dragon, he seem'd to me no
man,

But Michael trampling Satan, so I swear,
Being amazed but this went by—The
vows!

O ay—the wholesome madness of an
hour—

They served their use, then time, for
every knight

Believed himself a greater than himself,
And every follower eyed him as a God;
I'll he, being lifted up beyond himself,
Did mightier deeds than elsewhere he had
done,

And so the realm was made, but then
their vows—

First mainly thro' that sullyng of our
Queen—

Began to gall the knighthood, asking
whence

Had Arthur right to bind them to himself?
Dropt down from heaven? wash'd up
from out the deep?

They fail'd to trace him thro' the flesh
and blood

Of our old kings whence then? a doubt
ful lord

To bind them by inviolable vows,
Which flesh and blood perforce would
violate

For feel this arm of mine—the tide within
Red with free chase and heathen-scented
air,

Pulsing full man, can Arthur make me
pure

As any maiden child? lock up my tongue
From uttering freely what I freely hear?
Bind me to one? The wide world
laughs at it

And worldling of the world am I, and
know

The purgation that whitens ere his hour

Woos his own end, we are not angels here
 Nor shall be vows—I am woodman of
 the woods,
 And hear the garnet headed yaffingle
 Mock them my soul, we love but while
 we may,
 And therefore is my love so huge for thee,
 Seeing it is not bounded save by love'

Here ending, he moved toward her,
 and she said,
 'Good an I turn'd away my love for thee
 To some one thicke as countous as thy-
 self—

For courtesy wins woman all as well
 As valour may, but he that closes both
 Is perfect, he is Lancelot—taller indeed,
 Rosier and comelier, thou—but say I loved
 This knightliest of all knights, and cast
 thee back

Thine own small saw, "We love but
 while we may,"
 Well then, what answer?

He that while she spake,
 Mindful of what he brought to adorn her
 with,
 The jewels, had let one finger lightly touch
 The warm white apple of her throat,
 replied,

'Press this a little closer, sweet, until—
 Come, I am hunger'd and half anger'd—
 ment,
 Wine, wine—and I will love thee to the
 death,
 And out beyond into the dream to come'

So then, when both were brought to
 full accord,
 She rose, and set before him all he will'd,
 And after these had comforted the blood
 With meats and wines, and satiated their
 hearts—
 Now talking of their woodland paradise,
 The deer, the dew, the fern, the founts,
 the lawns,
 Now mocking at the much ungainliness,
 And craven shifts, and long crane legs of
 Mark—
 Then Tristram laughing caught the harp,
 and sang

Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bend
 the brier'

A star in heaven, a star within the meire'
 Ay, ay, O ay—a star was my desire,
 And one was far apart, and one was near
 Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bow the
 grass'

And one was water and one star was fire,
 And one will ever shine and one will pass
 Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that move the
 meire'

Then in the light's last glimmer Tris-
 tram show'd
 And swung the ruby carkanet She cried,
 'The collar of some Order, which our
 King
 Hath newly founded, all for thee, my soul,
 For thee, to yield thee grace beyond thy
 peers'

'Not so, my Queen,' he said, 'but the
 old fuit
 Grown on a magic oak tree in mid heaven,
 And won by Tristram as a tourney prize,
 And hither brought by Tristram for his
 last
 Love offering and peace offering unto
 thee'

He spoke, he turn'd, then, flinging
 round her neck,
 Claspt it, and cried 'Thine Order, O my
 Queen!'
 But, while he bow'd to kiss the jewell'd
 throat,
 Out of the dark, just as the lips had
 touch'd,
 Behind him rose a shadow and a shiel—
 'Mark's way,' said Mark, and clove him
 thro' the brain

That night came Arthur home, and
 while he climb'd,
 All in a death-dumb autumn dripping
 gloom,
 The stairway to the hall, and look'd and
 saw
 The great Queen's bower was dark,—
 about his feet
 A voice clung sobbing till he question'd it,

'What art thou?' and the voice about his
feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, 'I am thy
fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again'

GUINEVERE

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court,
and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little
maid,
A novice once low light betwixt them
burn'd
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all
abroad,
Beneath a moon unscen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face cloth to the
face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land
was still

For hither had she fled, her cause of
flight
Sir Modred, he that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the
throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance for
this
He chill'd the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement
And tamper'd with the Lords of the
White Horse,
Hearthen, the blood by Hengist left, and
sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end, and all his
arms
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot

For thus it chanced one morn when
all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that
mock'd the may,
Had been, then went, a-maying and
return'd,
That Modred still in green, all cold and eye,

Climb'd to the high top of the garden
wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her
best

Enid, and lissome Vivien, of her court
The wisest and the worst, and more
than this

He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
Spied where he couch'd, and as the
gudene's hand

Picks from the colewort a green cater
pillar,

So from the high wall and the flowering
grove

Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the
heel,

And cast him as a worm upon the way,
But when he knew the Prince tho' man'd
with dust,

He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
Made such excuses as he might, and these
Full lightly without scorn, for in those
days

No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in
scorn,

But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him
By those whom God had made full limb'd
and tall,

Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,
And he was answer'd softly by the King
And all his Table So Sir Lancelot help
To raise the Prince, who rising twice or
thrice

Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled,
and went

But, ever after, the small violence done
Runkled in him and ruffled all his heart,
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
A little bitter pool about a stone
On the bare coast

But when Sir Lancelot told
This matter to the Queen, at first she
laugh'd

Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
Then shudder'd, as the village wife who
cries

I shudder, some one steps across my
grave,'

Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed
 She half foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
 Would track her guilt until he found, and hers
 Would be for evermore a name of scorn
 Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,
 Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
 Herit hiding smile, and gray persistent eye
 Henceforward too, the Powers that tend
 the soul,
 To help it from the death that cannot die,
 And save it even in extremes, began
 To vex and plague her Many a time for
 hours,
 Beside the placid breathings of the King,
 In the dead night, grim faces came and
 went
 Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—
 Like to some doubtful noise of creaking
 doors,
 Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,
 That keeps the rust of murder on the
 walls—
 Held her awake or if she slept, she
 dream'd
 An awful dream, for then she seem'd to
 stand
 On some vast plain before a setting sun,
 And from the sun there swiftly made at her
 A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
 Before it, till it touch'd her, and she
 turn'd—
 When lo! her own, that broadening from
 her feet,
 And blackening, swallow'd all the land,
 and in it
 Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke
 And all this trouble did not pass but grew,
 Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless
 King,
 And trustful courtesies of household life,
 Became her bane, and at the last she
 said,
 'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own
 land,
 For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
 And if we meet again, some evil chance

Will make the smouldering scandal break
 and blaze
 Before the people, and our lord the King'
 And Lancelot ever promised, but he
 main'd,
 And still they met and met Again she
 said,
 'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee
 hence'
 And then they were agreed upon a night
 (When the good King should not be there)
 to meet
 And part for ever Passion pale they met
 And greeted hands in hands, and eye
 to eye,
 Low on the border of her couch they sat
 Stammering and staring it was then
 last hour,
 A madness of farewells And Modred
 brought
 His creatures to the basement of the tower
 For testimony, and crying with full voice
 'Traitor, come out, ye are trait at last,'
 aroused
 Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
 Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong,
 and he fell
 Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bore
 him off,
 And all was still then she, 'The end is
 come,
 And I am shamed for ever,' and he said,
 'Mine be the shame, mine was the sin
 but use,
 And fly to my strong castle overseas
 There will I hide thee, till my life shall
 end,
 There hold thee with my life against the
 world'
 She answer'd, 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold
 me so?
 Nay, friend, for we have taken our fare-
 wells
 Would God that thou couldst hide me
 from myself'
 Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
 Unwedded yet use now, and let us fly,
 For I will draw me into sanctuary,
 And bide my doom' So Lancelot got
 her horse,

Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
And then they rode to the divided way,
There kiss'd, and parted weeping for
he past,

Love loyal to the least wish of the Queen,
Back to his land, but she to Almesbury
Fled all night long by glimmering waste
and weald,

And heard the Spirits of the waste and
weald

Moan as she fled, or thought she heard
them mourn

And in herself she mourn'd 'Too late, too
late'

Till in the cold wind that forebuns the
morn,

A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,
Cioak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a
field of death,

For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,
Lured by the crimes and frailties of the
court,

Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land'

And when she came to Almesbury she
spoke

There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine
enemies

Pursue me, but, O perforceful Sisterhood,
Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
Hear name to whom ye yield it, till her
time

To tell you ' and her beauty, grace and
power,

Wrought as a charm upon them, and
they spared

To ask it

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week, unknown, among the
nuns,

Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name,
nor sought,

Wropt in her grief, for housel or for
shift,

But communed only with the little maid,
Who pleased her with a babbling heed-
lessness

Which often lured her from herself, but
now,

This night, a rumour wildly blown about
Came, that Sir Modred had usurp'd the
realm,

And leagued him with the heathen, while
the King

Was waging war on Lancelot then she
thought,

'With what a hate the people and the
King

Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon
her hands

Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd
No silence, brake it, uttering 'Late' so
late'

What hour, I wonder, now?' and when
she drew

No answer, by and by began to hum
An air the nuns had taught her, 'Late,
so late'

Which when she heard, the Queen look'd
up, and said,

'O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may
weep'

Whereat full willingly sang the little
maid

'Late, late, so late' and dark the
night and chill'

I late, late, so late' but we can enter still
Too late, too late' ye cannot enter now

'No light had we for that we do
repent,

And leaving this, the bridegroom will
relent

Too late, too late' ye cannot enter now

'No light so late' and dark and chill
the night'

O let us in, that we may find the light'
Too late, too late' ye cannot enter now

'Have we not heard the bridegroom is
so sweet?

O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet'
No, no, too late' ye cannot enter now'

So sang the novice, while full passion-
ately,

Her head upon her hands, remembering

Her thought when first she came, wept
the sad Queen

Then said the little novice prattling to her,

‘O pray you, noble lady, weep no
more,

But let my words, the words of one so
small,

Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,
And if I do not there is penance given—
Comfort your sorrows, for they do not
flow

From evil done, I might sure am I of that,
Who see you tender grace and stateliness,
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the
King’s,

And weighing find them less, for gone is
he

To wage him war against Sir Lancelot
there,

Round that strong castle where he holds
the Queen,

And Modred whom he left in charge of
all,

The traitor—Ah sweet lady, the King’s
grief

For his own self, and his own Queen, and
realm,

Must needs be thrice as great as any of
ours

For me, I thank the saints, I am not
great

For if there ever come a grief to me
I cry my cry in silence, and have done
None knows it, and my tears have brought
me good

But even were the griefs of little ones
As great as those of great ones, yet this
grief

Is added to the griefs the great must
bear,

That howsoever much they may desire
Silence, they cannot weep behind a
cloud

As even here they talk at Almesbury
About the good King and his wicked
Queen,

And were I such a King with such a Queen,
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,
But were I such a King, it could not be

Then to her own sad heart mutter’d the
Queen,

‘Will the child kill me with her innocent
talk?’

But openly she answer’d, ‘Must not I,
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,
Grieve with the common grief of all the
realm?’

‘Yea,’ said the maid, ‘this is all
woman’s grief,

That she is woman, whose disloyal life
Hath wrought confusion in the Table
Round

Which good King Arthur founded, years
ago,

With signs and miracles and wonders,
there

At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen’

Then thought the Queen within herself
again,

‘Will the child kill me with her foolish
prate?’

But openly she spake and said to her,
‘O little maid, shut in by nunney walls,
What canst thou know of Kings and
Tables Round,

Or what of signs and wonders, but the
signs

And simple miracles of thy nunneries?’

To whom the little novice gravely,
‘Yea, but I know the land was full of
signs

And wonders ere the coming of the Queen
So said my father, and himself was knight
Of the great Table—at the founding of it
And rode thereto from Lyonnesse, and
he said

That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paused, and turn-
ing—there,

All down the lonely coast of Lyonnesse,
Each with a beacon star upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
He saw them—herdland after herdland
flame

Far on into the rich heart of the west

And in the light the white mermaiden
swam,
And strong man-breasted things stood
from the sea,
And sent a deep sea voice thro' all the
land,

To which the little elves of chasm and cleft
Made answer, sounding like a distant horn
So sad my father—yea, and furthermore,
Next morning, while he past the dim lit
woods,

Himself beheld three spirits mad with
joy

Come dashing down on a tall wayside
flower,

That shook beneath them, as the thistle
shakes

When three gray linnets wrangle for the
seed

And still at evenings on before his house
The flickering faney circle wheel'd and
broke

Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and
broke

Flying, for all the land was full of life
And when at last he came to Camelot,
A wreath of my dance's hand in-hand
Swung round the lighted lantern of the
hall,

And in the hall itself was such a feast
As never man had dream'd, for every
knight

Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served
By hands unseen, and even as he said
Down in the cellar merry bloated things
Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the
butts

While the wine ran so glad were spirits
and men

Before the coming of the sinful Queen'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat
littlerly,

'Were they so glad? all prophets were
they all,

Spirits and men could none of them
foresee,

Not even thy wise father with his signs
And wonders, what his fall'n upon the
realm?'

To whom the novice garrulously again,
'Yea, one, a bard, of whom my father
said,

Full many a noble war song had he sung,
Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,
Between the steep cliff and the coming
wave,

And many a mystic lay of life and death
Had chanted on the smoky mountain
tops,

When round him bent the spirits of the
hills

With all their dewy hair blown back like
flame

So said my father—and that night the bard
Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang
the King

As wellnigh more than man, and laid at
those

Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois
For there was no man knew from whence
he came,

But after tempest, when the long wave
broke

All down the thundering shores of Bude
and Eos,

There came a day as still as heaven, and
then

They found a naked child upon the sands
Of dark Tintagel by the Cornish sea,

And that was Arthur, and they foster'd
him

Till he by miracle was approved King
And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth, and could
he find

A woman in her womanhood as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
The twain together well might change the
world

But even in the middle of his song
He falter'd, and his hand fell from the
harp,

And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would
have fall'n,

But that they stay'd him up, nor would
he tell

His vision, but what doubt that he fore-
saw

This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?'

He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight but many a
knight was slain,

And many more, and all his kith and kin
Came to him, and abode in his own land
And many more when Modred raised
revolt,

Forgetful of their oath and fealty, came
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me
And of this remnant will I leave a part
True men who love me still, for whom I
live,

To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hur of this low head be hurnd
Fear not thou shalt be guarded till my
death

Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have err'd not, that I much to meet my
doom

Thou hast not made my life so sweet to
me,

That I the King should greatly care to
live,

For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life
Bear with me for the last time while I
show,

Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast
sinn'd

For when the Roman left us, and their law
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a
dead

Of prowess, done redress'd a random
wrong

But I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood errant of this realm and
all

The realms together under me, their
Heard,

In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time
I made them lay their hands in mine and
sweat

To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience is
their King,

To break the heathen and uphold the
Christ,

To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honour his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her, for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable
words

And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a
man

And all this throve before I wedded thee,
Believing, "to mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy"
Then came thy shameful sin with Lance
lot,

Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt,
Then others, following these my mightiest
knights,

And drawing foul ensample from fair
names,

Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
And all thro' thee 'so that this life of mine
I giv'd as God's high gift from scathe
and wrong,

Not greatly care to lose, but rather think
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
To sit once more within his lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my
knights,

And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds,
As in the golden days before thy sin
For which of us, who might be left, could
speak

Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at
thee?

And in thy bowels of Camelot or of Uruk
thy shadow still would glide from room
to room,

And I should evermore be vexed with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair
For think not tho' thou wouldst not love
thy lord,

Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee

I am not made of so slight elements
Yet must I leave thee, worn, to thy
shame

I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the
wife

Whom he knows false, abide and rule the
house

For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the
crowd,

Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and
saps

The fealty of our friends, and stirs the
pulse

With devil's leaps, and poisons half the
young

Worst of the worst were that man he that
reigns!

Better the King's waste hearth and aching
heart

Than thou seated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people, and their
bane.

He paused, and in the pause she crept
an inch

Nearer, and hid her hands about his feet
Far off a solitary trumpet blew

Then waiting by the doors the warhorse
neigh'd

As at a friend's voice, and he spoke again

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy
crimes,

I did not come to censure thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, lying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet
The wrath which forced my thoughts on
that fierce law,

The doom of treason and the flaming
death,

(When first I found thee hidden here) is
past

The pang—which while I weigh'd thy
heart with one

Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in
pain

And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives—do thou for thine own soul the
rest

But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with
thee—

I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's—nay, they never were the
King's

I cannot take thy hand, that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd, and
mine own flesh,

Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
"I love thee" yet not less, O Guine-
vere,

For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my
life

So far, that my doom is, I love thee still
Let no man dream but that I love thee still
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and
thou

Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine,
and know

I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another—Leave me
that,

I charge thee, my last hope—Now must
I hence

Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet
blow

They summon me their King to lead mine
hosts

Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they
call

My sister's son—no kin of mine, who
leagues

With Lords of the White Horse, heathen,
and I nights,

Tutors—and strike him dead, and meet
myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious
doom
And thou remaining here wilt learn the
event,
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more—
Farewell!’

And while she grovelling at his feet,
She felt the King’s breath wander o’er his
neck,
And in the darkness o’er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that
blest

Then, listening till those rumed steps
were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish
found
The casement ‘peradventure,’ so she
thought,
‘If I might see his face, and not be seen’
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with arch a
light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the
Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore
And while he spoke to these his helm was
lower’d,
To which for crest the golden dragon
clung
Of Britain, so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel’s, but she
saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the
lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a storm of
fire
And even then he turn’d, and more and
more
The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem’d the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him
gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom

Then she stretch’d out her arms and
cried aloud
‘Oh Arthur!’ there her voice brake
suddenly,
Then—as a stream that spouting from a
cliff
Falls in mid air, but gathering at the base
Re makes itself, and flashes down the
vale—
Went on in passionate utterance

‘Gone—my lord!’
Gone thro’ my sin to slay and to be slun!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak
Farewell? I should have answer’d his
farewell
His mercy choked me Gone, my lord
the King,
My own true lord! how dare I call him
mine?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution he, the
King,
Call’d me polluted shall I kill myself?
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul, nor can I kill my shame,
No, nor by living can I live it down
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks
to months,
The months will add themselves and make
the years,
The years will roll into the centuries,
And mine will ever be a name of scorn
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame
Let the world be, that is but of the world
What else? what hope? I think there was
a hope,
Except he mock’d me when he spoke of
hope,
His hope he call’d it, but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts
And blessed be the King, who hath for
given
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down
sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God Ah great and gentle
lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a sinner

Among his warring senses, to thy
knights—
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that
took
Full easily all impressions from below,
Would not look up, or half despised the
height
To which I would not or I could not
climb—
I thought I could not breathe in that fine
air
That pure seventy of perfect light—
I wanted warmth and colour which I
found
In Iancelot—now I see thee what thou
art,
Thou art the highest and most human
too,
Not Lancelot, nor another Is there
none
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
Now—ere he goes to the great Battle?
none
Myself must tell him in that pure life,
But now it were too daring Ah my
God,
What might I not have made of thy fur
world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature
here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest
It surely was my profit had I known
It would have been my pleasure had I
seen
We needs must love the highest when we
see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another'

Here her hand
Grasp'd, made her veil her eyes she
look'd and saw
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said
to her,
'Yer little mud, for am I not forgiven?'
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns
All round her, weeping, and her heart
was loosed
Within her, and she wept with these and
said,

'Ye know me then, that wicked one,
who broke
The vast design and purpose of the King
O shut me round with narrowing nunnery
walls,
Meek maidens, from the voices crying
"shame"
I must not scorn myself he loves me still
Let no one dream but that he loves me
still
So let me, if you do not shudder at me,
Not shun to call me sister, dwell with
you,
Wear black and white, and be a nun like
you,
Fast with your fasts, not feasting with
your feasts,
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at
your joys,
But not rejoicing, mingle with your rites,
Pray and be pray'd for, lie before your
shrines,
Do each low office of your holy house,
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
Who ransom'd us, and slier too than I,
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal
mine own,
And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer
I the sombre close of that voluptuous day,
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the
King'

She said they took her to themselves,
and she
Still hoping, fearing 'is it yet too late?'
Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess
died
Then she, for her good deeds and her
pure life,
And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had
borne,
Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess,
lived
For three brief years, and there, an
Abbess, past
To where beyond these voices there is
peace

End of 'The Round Table'

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the
knights,

Told, when the man was no more than a
voice

In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other
minds

For on their march to westward,
Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering
host,
Heard in his tent the mornings of the
King

'I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His
fields,

But in His ways with men I find Him not
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die
O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and
dim,

And have not power to see it as it is
Perchance, because we see not to the
close,—

For I, being simple, thought to work His
will,

And have but stricken with the sword in
vain.

And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
Reels back into the beast, and is no more
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my
death

Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall
not die'

Then, ere that last weird battle in the
west,
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain
kill'd

In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain
blown

Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
Went shrilling, 'Hollow, hollow all
delight'

Hail, King! to-morrow thou shalt pass
away

Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee
And I am blown along a wandering
wind,

And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight!
And fainter onward, like wild birds that
change

Then season in the night and wail their
way

From cloud to cloud, down the long wind
the dream

Shrill'd, but in going mingled with dream
voices

Full in the moonlit haze among the hills,
As of some lonely city sack'd by night,
When all is lost, and wife and child with
wail

Pass to new lords, and Arthur woke and
call'd,

'Who speak? A dream O light upon
the wind,

Thine, Gawain, was the voice—the these
dream voices

Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste
and wild

Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?'

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and
spoke

'O me, my King, let pass whatever will,
Elves, and the harmless glamour of the
field,

But in their stead thy name and glory cling
To all high places like a golden cloud
For ever—but as yet thou shalt not pass
Light was Gawain in life, and light in
death

Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man,
And true not thou for dreams from him,
but use—

I hear the steps of Modred in the west,

And with him many of thy people, and
knights
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but
grosser grown
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and
thee
Right well in heart they know thee for
the King
Arise, go forth and conquer us of old '

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-
vere
'Far other is this battle in the west
Whereto we move, than when we strove
in youth,
And brake the petty kings, and fought
with Rome,
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman
wall,
And shook him thro' the north Ill doom
is mine
To war against my people and my knights
The king who fights his people fights
himself
And they my knights, who loved me once,
the stroke
That strikes them dead is as my death to
me
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
Thro' this blind haze, which ever since I
saw
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
With folded in the passes of the world '

Then rose the King and moved his host
by night,
And ever push'd Sir Modied, league by
league,
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—
A land of old upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again,
Where fragments of forgotten peoples
dwelt,
And the long mountains ended in a coast
Of ever shifting sand, and far away
The phantom circle of a moaning sea
There the pursuer could pursue no more,
And he that fled no further fly the King,
And there, that day when the great light
of heaven

Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,
On the waste sand by the waste sea they
closed
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the
west
A deathwhite mist slept over sand and
sea
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed
it, died
Down with his blood, till all his heart was
cold
With formless fear, and ev'n on Arthur
fell
Confusion, since he saw not whom he
fought
For friend and foe were shadows in the
mist,
And friend slew friend not knowing whom
he slew,
And some had visions out of golden
youth,
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
Look in upon the battle, and in the mist
Was many a noble deed, many a base,
And chance and craft and strength in
single fights,
And ever and anon with host to host
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the
hard mail hewn,
Shield breakings, and the clash of brands,
the crash
Of battleaxes on shatter'd helms, and
shrieks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the
mist,
And shouts of heathen and the wailing
knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blas-
phemies,
Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of
the lungs
In that close mist, and cryings for the
light,
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead

Last, as by some one deathbed after
wail
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death

Of deathlike swoon, thus over all that
 shore,
 Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
 A dead hush fell, but when the dolorous
 day
 Grew drier toward twilight falling,
 came
 A bitter wind, clear from the North, and
 blew
 The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
 Rose, and the pale King glanced across
 the field
 Of battle but no man was moving there,
 Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
 Nor yet of heathen, only the wan wave
 Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
 Swaying the helpless hands, and up and
 down
 Tumbling the hollow helmets of the
 fallen,
 And shiver'd brands that once had fought
 with Pome,
 And rolling full along the gloomy shore
 The voice of days of old and days to be

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-
 vere,
 And whiter than the mist that all day long
 Had held the field of battle was the King

'Hearst thou this great voice that
 shakes the world,
 And wastes the narrow realm whereon we
 move,
 And beats upon the faces of the dead,
 My dead, as tho' they had not died for
 me?—

O Bedivere, for on my heart hath full'n
 Confusion, till I know not what I am,
 Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King
 Behold, I see in but King among the dead'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere
 'My King,
 King everywhere' and so the dead live
 kings,
 There also will I worship thee as King
 Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
 Who love thee, but who hates thee, he
 that brought

The heathen back among us, yonder
 stands,
 Modred, unharm'd, the traitor of thine
 house'

Then spake the King 'My house hath
 been my doom
 But call not thou this traitor of my house
 Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with
 me
 My house lie rather they who swore my
 vows,

Yea, even while they brake them, own'd
 me King
 And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
 When all the purport of my throne hath
 full'd,

That quick or dead thou holdest me for
 King
 King am I, whatsoever be their cry,
 And one last act of kinghood shalt thou
 see

Yet, ere I pass' And uttering thus the
 King

Made at the man then Modred's note
 his hope

Had on that helm which many a heathen
 sword

Had beaten thin, while Arthur at one
 blow,

Striking the last stroke with Icalibur,
 Slew him, and all but slun himself, he fell

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
 Among the mountains by the winter sea,
 Until King Arthur's fable, man by man,
 Had full'n in Lyonesse about their lord,
 King Arthur then because his wound
 was deep,

The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,
 That stood on a dark strand of barren land
 On one side by the Ocean, and on one
 Lay a great water, and the moon was full

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-
 vere

'The sequel of to day unsolders all
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights

Whereof this world holds record Such
a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved I think
that we

Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly
deeds,

Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin swore that I should come
again

To rule once more, but, let what will be,
be,

I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride for thou remem-
berest how

In those old days, one summer noon, an
aim

Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
derful,

Holding the sword—and how I now'd
across

And took it, and have worn it, like a king,
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known
But now delay not take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring
me word'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee
thus,

Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the
helm—

A little thing may harm a wounded man,
Yet I thy best will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee
word'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he
stept,

And in the moon athwart the place of
tombs,

Where lay the mighty bones of ancient
men,

Old knights, and over them the sea wind
sang

Shall, chill, with flakes of foam He,
stepping down

By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake

There drew he forth the brand Excali-
bur,

And o'er him, drawing it, the winter
moon,

Brightening the skirts of a long cloud,
ran forth

And sparkled keen with frost against the
hilt

For a' the haft twinkled with diamond
sparks,

Myriads of topaz lights, and jacinth work
Of subtlest jewellery He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he
stood,

This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd

There in the many knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the
margin

So strode he back slow to the wounded
King

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-
vere

'Hast thou perform'd my mission which
I gave?

What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-
vere

'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag'

To whom replied King Arthur, fain
and pale

'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy
name,

Not rendering true answer, as becom'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight

For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the meek

This is a shameful thing for men to lie

Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me
word '

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the
meie,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in
thought,
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chascd, he
smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the
earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of
many men
What good should follow this, if this were
done?
What harm, undone? Deep harm to
disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule
Were it well to obey then, if a king
demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what
he does
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? But were this
kept,
Stored in some treasure house of mighty
king,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excali-
bur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the
Lake
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the
deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the after-
time
To all the people, winning reverence
But now much honour and much fame
were lost '

So spake he, clouded with his own
conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded
King

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing
heavily
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-
vere
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds '

To whom replied King Arthur, much
in wrath
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will I see thee what
thou art,
For thou, the latest left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
I thou wouldst betray me for the precious
hilt,
Either from lust of gold, or like a gull
Following the giddy pleasure of the eyes
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee
hence
But, if thou spruce to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands '

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and
ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly,
plunged
Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd
the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it The
great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the
moon,
And flashing round and round, and
whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter
shock

By night, with noises of the Northern Sea
 So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur
 But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonder-
 derful,
 And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd
 him
 Three times, and drew him under in the
 mere
 And lightly went the other to the King

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing
 thicker breath
 'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done
 Speak out what is it thou hast heard, or
 seen?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-
 veie
 'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the
 gems
 Should blind my purpose, for I never
 saw,
 Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
 Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
 So great a miracle as yonder hilt
 Then with both hands I flung him, wheel-
 ing him,
 But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonder-
 derful,
 That caught him by the hilt, and
 brandish'd him
 Three times, and drew him under in the
 mere'

And answer made King Arthur, breath-
 ing hard
 'My end draws nigh, 'tis time that I
 were gone
 Make broad thy shoulders to receive my
 weight,
 And bear me to the margin, yet I fear
 My wound hath taken cold, and I shall
 die'

So saying, from the pavement he half
 rose,
 Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
 And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
 As in a picture Him Sir Bedivere

Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
 And would have spoken, but he found
 not words,
 Then took with care, and kneeling on
 one knee,
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid
 hands,
 And rising bore him thro' the place of
 tombs

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted
 hard,
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
 When all the house is mute So sigh'd
 the King,
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear,
 'Quick, quick!
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die'
 But the other swiftly strode from ridge to
 ridge,
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as
 he walk'd,
 Larger than human on the frozen hills
 He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
 Before His own thought drove him like
 a goad
 Dry clasp'd his harness in the icy caves
 And barren chasms, and all to left and
 right
 The bare black cliff clung'd round him,
 as he based
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed
 heels—
 And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
 And the long glories of the winter moon

Then saw they how there hove a dusky
 barge,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
 Beneath them, and descending they were
 ware
 That all the decks were dense with stately
 forms,
 Black stoled, black hooded, like a dream
 —by these
 Three Queens with crowns of gold and
 from them rose
 A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
 And, as it were one voice, an agony

Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one
comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the
world

Then murmur'd Arthur, Place me in
the barge
So to the barge they came There those
three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King,
and wept
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and
chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining
loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Stained with dark blood for all his face
was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd
moon
Smote by the flesh beam of the spring-
ing east,
And all his graves and cusses dash'd with
drops
Of onset, and the light and lustrous
curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dark throne—were puch'd
with dust,
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that
fringed his lips
So like a shatter'd column lay the King,
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in
rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and
charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings

Then loudly cried the bold Sir
Bedivere
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my
eyes?
For now I see the true old times are
dead,

When every morning brought a noble
chance,
And every chance brought out a noble
knight
Such times have been not since the light
that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh
But now the whole Round Table is dis-
solved
Which was an image of the mighty world,
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days drunken round me, and the
years,
Among new men, strange faces, other
minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the
barge
'The old order changeth, yielding place
to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
I feel one good custom should corrupt the
world
Comfort thyself what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I
have done
May He within himself make pure! but
thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul More things are
wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of Wherefore,
let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day
For what women better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of
prayer
Both for themselves and those who call
them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of
God
But now farewell I am going a long way
With thee thou seest—if indeed I go
(For all my mind is clouded with a
doubt)—
To the island valley of Avilion,
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies

Deep meadow'd, happy, fur with orchard
lawns
And bowery holms crown'd with summer
sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous
wound'

So said he, and the barge with oar and
sail
Moved from the bank, like some full
breasted swan
That, fluting a wild cruel ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes
the flood
With swarthy webs Long stood Sir
Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of
dawn,
And on the moor the wailing died away

But when that moan had past for ever
more,
The stillness of the dead world's winter
dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King
is gone'
And therewithal came on him the wend
rhyme,
'From the great deep to the great deep
he goes'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly
clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron
crag,

Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet,
and cried,
'He passes to be King among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again, but—if he come no
more—
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black
boat,
Who shiek'd and wail'd, the three
whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with
living light,
They stood before his throne in silence,
friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his
need'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there
came, but fust
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo boom of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars

Thereat once more he moved about,
and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and
saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bore
the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light
And the new sun rose bringing the new
year

TO THE QUEEN

O loyal to the royal in thyself,
And loyal to thy land, as this to thee—
Bear witness, that rememberable day,
When, pile as yet, and fever woin, the
Prince
Who service had pluck'd his flickering life
again
From halfway down the shadow of the
grave,
Past with thee thro' thy people and then
love,

And I ondon roll'd one tide of joy thro'
all
Hither trebled millions, and loud leagues of
man
And welcome! witness, too, the silent city,
Thy prayer of many a race and creed,
and clime—
Thunderless lightnings striking under sea
From sunset and sunrise of all thy realm,
And that true North, whereof we lately
heard

<p>A strain to shame us 'keep you to you selves , So loyal is too costly ! friends—your love Is but a burthen loose the bond, and go ' Is this the tone of empire ? here the faith That made us rulers ? this, indeed, her voice And meaning, whom the roar of Hougou- mont Left mightiest of all peoples under heaven ? What shock has fool'd her since, that she should speak So feebly ? wealthier—wealthier—houn- by houn ! The voice of Britain, or a sinking land, Some third rate isle half lost among her seas ? There rang her voice, when the full city peal'd Thine and thy Prince ! The loyal to their crown Are loyal to their own far sons, who love Our ocean empire with her boundless homes For ever broadening England, and her throne In our vast Orient, and one isle, one isle, That knows not her own greatness if she knows And dreads it we are fall'n —But thou, my Queen, Not for itself, but thro' thy living love For one to whom I made it o'er his grave Sacred, accept this old imperfect tale, New-old, and shadowing sense at war with Soul Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost, Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak, And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still, or him</p>	<p>Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleon's, one Touch'd by the adulterous finger of a time That hover'd between war and wanton- ness, And crownings and dethronements take withal Thy poet's blessing, and his trust that Heaven Will blow the tempest in the distance back From thine and ours for some are scared, who mark, Or wisely or unwisely, signs of storm, Waverings of every one with every wind, And wordy trucklings to the transient hour, And fierce or careless looseness of the faith, And Softness breeding scorn of simple life, Or Cowardice, the child of lust for gold, Or Labour, with a groan and not a voice, Or Art with poisonous honey stol'n from France, And that which knows, but careful for itself, And that which knows not, ruling that which knows To its own harm the goal of this great world Lies beyond sight yet—if our slowly grown And crown'd Republic's crowning com- mon sense, That saved her many times, not fail— their fears Are morning shadows huger than the shapes That cast them, not those gloomier which forego The darkness of that battle in the West, Where all of high and holy dies away</p>
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